THE

WORKS

OF

LORD BYRON.

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THE

WORKS

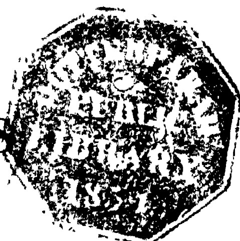
OF

LORD BYRON,

COMPREHENDING THE

SUPPRESSED POEMS.

EMBELLISHED WITH A PORTRAIT, AND A SKETCH OF HIS LIFE.



VOL. IX. + X

PARIS

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MARINO FALIERO.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

MARINO FALIERO, Doge of Venice.
BERTUCCIO FALIERO, Nephew of the Doge.
LIONI, a Patrician and Senator.
BENINTENDE, Chief of the Council of Ten.
MICHEL STENO, one of the three Capi of the Forty.
ISRAEL BERTUCCIO, Chief of the Arsenal, }
PHILIP CALENDARO, } *Conspirators.*
DAGOLINO, }
BERTRAM, }
Signor of the Night, { *"Signore di Notte," one of the Officers belonging to the Republic.*
First Citizen.
Second Citizen.
Third Citizen.
VINCENZO, }
PIETRO, } *Officers belonging to the Ducal Palace.*
BATTISTA, }
Secretary of the Council of Ten.
Guards, Conspirators, Citizens, The Council of Ten, The Giunta, etc. etc.

WOMEN.

ANGIOLINA, Wife to the Doge.
MARIANNA, her Friend.
Female Attendants, etc.

Scene, VENICE—in the year 1355.

PREFACE.

THE conspiracy of the Doge Marino Faliero is one of the most remarkable events in the annals of the most singular government, city, and people of modern history. It occurred in the year 1355. Every thing about Venice is, or was, extraordinary —her aspect is like a dream, and her history is like a romance. The story of this Doge is to be found in all her Chronicles, and particularly detailed in the "Lives of the Doges," by Marin Sanuto, which is given in the Appendix. It is simply and clearly related, and is, perhaps, more dramatic in itself than any scenes which can be founded upon the subject.

Marino Faliero appears to have been a man of talents and of courage. I find him commander in chief of the land forces at the siege of Zara, where he beat the King of Hungary and his army of

80,000 men, killing 8000 men, and keeping the besieged at the same time in check, an exploit to which I know none similar in history, except that of Cæsar at Elesia, and of Prince Eugene at Belgrade. He was afterwards commander of the fleet in the same war. He took Capo d'Istria. He was ambassador at Genoa and Rome, at which last he received the news of his election to the Dukedom; his absence being a proof that he sought it by no intrigue, since he was apprized of his predecessor's death and his own succession at the same moment. But he appears to have been of an ungovernable temper. A story is told by Sanuto, of his having, many years before, when podesta and captain at Treviso, boxed the ears of the bishop, who was somewhat tardy in bringing the Host. For this honest Sanuto "saddles him with a judgment," as Thwackum did Square; but he does not tell us whether he was punished or rebuked by the Senate for this outrage at the time of its commission. He seems, indeed, to have been afterwards at peace with the church, for we find him ambassador at Rome, and invested with the fief of Val di Marino, in the march of Treviso, and with the title of

Count, by Lorenzo Count-Bishop of Ceneda. For these facts my authorities are, Sanuto, Vettor Sandi, Andrea Navagero, and the account of the siege of Zara, first published by the indefatigable Abbate Morelli, in his "Monumenti Veneziani di varia letteratura," printed in 1796, all of which I have looked over in the original language. The moderns, Daru, Sismondi, and Laugier, nearly agree with the ancient chroniclers. Sismondi attributes the conspiracy to his *jealousy;* but I find this nowhere asserted by the national historians. Vettor Sandi, indeed, says, that "Altri scris sero che . . . . dalla gelosa suspizion di esso Doge siasi fatto (Michel Steno) staccar con violenza," etc. etc.; but this appears to have been by no means the general opinion, nor is it alluded to by Sanuto or by Navagero; and Sandi himself adds a moment after, that "peraltre Veneziane memorie traspiri, che *non* il *solo* desiderio di vendetta lo dispose alla congiura ma anche la innata abituale ambizion sua, per cui anelava a farsi principe indipendente." The first motive appears to have been excited by the gross affront of the words written by Michel Steno on the ducal chair,

and by the light and inadequate sentence of the Forty on the offender, who was one of their "tre Capi." The attentions of Steno himself appear to have been directed towards one of her damsels, and not to the "Dogaressa" herself, against whose fame not the slightest insinuation appears, while she is praised for her beauty, and remarked for her youth. Neither do I find it asserted (unless the hint of Sandi be an assertion) that the Doge was actuated by jealousy of his wife; but rather by respect for her, and for his own honour, warranted by his past services and present dignity.

I know not that the historical facts are alluded to in English, unless by Dr. Moore in his View of Italy. His account is false and flippant, full of stale jests about old men and young wives, and wondering at so great an effect from so slight a cause. How so acute and severe an observer of mankind as the author of Zeluco could wonder at this is inconceivable. He knew that a basin of water spilt on Mrs. Masham's gown deprived the Duke of Marlborough of his command, and led to the inglorious peace of Utrecht—that Louis XIV. was plunged into the most desolating wars be-

cause his minister was nettled at his finding fault with a window, and wished to give him another occupation—that Helen lost Troy—that Lucretia expelled the Tarquins from Rome—and that Cava brought the Moors to Spain—that an insulted husband led the Gauls to Clusium, and thence to Rome—that a single verse of Frederic II. of Prussia on the Abbé de Bernis, and a jest on Madame de Pompadour, led to the battle of Rosbach—that the elopement of Dearbhorgil with Mac Murchad conducted the English to the slavery of Ireland—that a personal pique between Maria Antoinette and the Duke of Orleans precipitated the first expulsion of the Bourbons—and, not to multiply instances that Commodus, Domitian, and Caligula fell victims, not to their public tyranny, but to private vengeance—and that an order to make Cromwell disembark from the ship in which he would have sailed to America, destroyed both king and Commonwealth. After these instances, on the least reflection, it is indeed extraordinary in Dr. Moore to seem surprised that a man, used to command, who had served and swayed in the most important offices, should fiercely resent, in a fierce age, an

unpunished affront, the grossest that can be offered to a man, be he prince or peasant. The age of Faliero is little to the purpose, unless to favour it.

"The young man's wrath is like straw on fire,
"*But like red-hot steel is the old man's ire.*"

"Young men soon give and soon forget affronts,
"Old age is slow at both."

Laugier's reflections are more philosophical:—"Tale fù il fine ignominioso di un' uomo, che la sua nascita, la sua età, il suo carattere dovevano tener lontano dalle passioni produttrici di grandi delitti. I suoi *talenti* per lungo tempo esercitati ne' maggiori impieghi, la sua capacità sperimentata ne' governi e nelle ambasciate; gli avevano acquistato la stima e la fiducia de' cittadini, ed avevano uniti i suffragi per collocarlo alla testa della republica. Innalzato ad un grado che terminava gloriosamente la sua vita, il risentimento di un' ingiuria leggiera insinuò nel suo cuore tal veleno che bastò a corrompere le antiche sue qualità, e a condurlo al termine dei scellerati; serio esempio, che prova *non esservi età, in cui la prudenza umana sia sicura, e che nell' uomo restano sempre passioni capaci a disonorarlo, quando non invigili sopra se stesso.*"—*Laugier, Italian translation,* vol. iv. pp. 30, 31.

Where did Dr. Moore find that Marino Faliero begged his life? I have searched the chroniclers, and find nothing of the kind; it is true that he avowed all. He was conducted to the place of torture, but there is no mention made of any application for mercy on his part; and the very circumstance of their having taken him to the rack seems to argue any thing but his having shown a want of firmness, which would doubtless have been also mentioned by those minute historians who by no means favour him: such, indeed, would be contrary to his character as a soldier, to the age in which he lived, and at which he died, as it is to the truth of history. I know no justification at any distance of time for calumniating an historical character; surely truth belongs to the dead and to the unfortunate, and they who have died upon a scaffold have generally had faults enough of their own, without attributing to them that which the very incurring of the perils which conduced them to their violent death renders, of all others, the most improbable. The black veil which is painted over the place of Marino Faliero amongst the doges, and the Giant's Staircase, where

he was crowned, and discrowned, and decapitated, struck forcibly upon my imagination, as did his fiery character and strange story. I went in 1819, in search of his tomb, more than once, to the church San Giovanni e San Paolo; and as I was standing before the monument of another family, a priest came up to me and said, "I can show you finer monuments than that." I told him that I was in search of that of the Faliero family, and particularly of the Doge Marino's. "Oh," said he, "I will show it you;" and conducting me to the outside, pointed out a Sarcophagus in the wall, with an illegible inscription. He said that it had been in a convent adjoining, but was removed after the French came, and placed in its present situation; that he had seen the tomb opened at its removal; there were still some bones remaining but no positive vestige of the decapitation. The equestrian statue of which I have made menton in the third act as before that church, is not, however, of a Faliero, but of some other now obsolete warrior, although of a later date. There were two other Doges of this family prior to Marino: Ordelafo, who fell in battle at Zara, in 1117,

(where his descendant afterwards conquered the Huns,) and Vital Faliero, who reigned in 1082. The family, originally from Fano, was of the most illustrious in blood and wealth in the city, of once the most wealthy and still the most ancient families in Europe. The length I have gone into on this subject will show the interest I have taken in it. Whether I have succeeded or not in the tragedy, I have at least transferred into our language an historical fact worthy of commemoration.

It is now four years that I have meditated this work, and before I had sufficiently examined the records, I was rather disposed to have made it turn on a jealousy in Faliero. But perceiving no foundation for this in historical truth, and aware that jealousy is an exhausted passion in the drama, I have given it a more historical form. I was, besides, well advised by the late Matthew Lewis on that point, in talking with him of my intention, at Venice, in 1817. "If you make him jealous," said he, "recollect that you have to contend with "established writers, to say nothing of Shake-"speare, and an exhausted subject;—stick to the "old fiery Doge's natural character, which will

" bear you out, if properly drawn; and make your " plot as regular as you can." Sir William Drummond gave me nearly the same counsel. How far I have followed these instructions, or whether they have availed me, is not for me to decide. I have had no view to the stage; in its present state it is, perhaps, not a very exalted object of ambition; besides, I have been too much behind the scenes to have thought it so at any time. And I cannot conceive any man of irritable feeling putting himself at the mercies of an audience:—the sneering reader, and the loud critic, and the tart review, are scattered and distant calamities; but the trampling of an intelligent or of an ignorant audience on a production which, be it good or bad, has been a mental labour to the writer, is a palpable and immediate grievance, heightened by a man's doubt of their competency to judge, and his certainty of his own imprudence in electing them his judges. Were I capable of writing a play which could be deemed stage-worthy, success would give me no pleasure, and failure great pain. It is for this reason that, even during the time of being one of the committee of one of the thea-

tres, I never made the attempt, and never will.* But surely there is dramatic power somewhere,—where Joanna Baillie, and Milman, and John

* While I was in the sub-committee of Drury Lane Theatre, I can vouch for my colleagues, and I hope for myself, that we did our best to bring back the legitimate drama. I tried what I could to get "De Montfort" revived, but in vain, and equally in vain in favour of Sotheby's "Ivan," which was thought an acting play; and I endeavoured also to wake Mr. Coleridge to write a tragedy. Those who are not in the secret will hardly believe that the "School for Scandal" is the play which has brought *least money*, averaging the number of times it has been acted since its production; so Manager Dibdin assured me. Of what has occurred since Maturin's "Bertram," I am not aware, so that I may be traducing, through ignorance, some excellent new writers: if so, I beg their pardon. I have been absent from England nearly five years, and, till last year, I never read an English newspaper since my departure, and am now only aware of theatrical matters through the medium of the Parisian English Gazette of Galignani, and only for the last twelve months. Let me then deprecate all offence to tragic or comic writers, to whom I wish well, and of whom I know nothing. The long complaints of the actual state of the drama arise, however, from no fault of the performers. I can conceive nothing better than Kemble, Cooke, and Kean, in their very different manners, or than Elliston in *gentleman's* comedy, and in some parts of tragedy. Miss O'Neill I never saw, having made and kept a determination to see nothing which should divide or disturb my recollection of Siddons. Siddons and Kemble were the *ideal* of tragic action; I never saw any thing at all resembling them, even in *person:* for this reason, we shall never see again Coriolanus or Macbeth. When Kean is blamed for want of dignity, we should remember that it is a grace and not an art, and not to be attained by study. In all, *not* SUPERnatural parts, he is perfect; even his very

Wilson exist. The "City of the Plague" and the "Fall of Jerusalem" are full of the best "*materiel*" for tragedy that has been seen since Horace Walpole, except passages of "Ethwald" and "De Montfort." It is the fashion to underrate Horace Walpole; firstly, because he was a nobleman, and secondly, because he was a gentleman; but, to say nothing of the composition of his incomparable "Letters," and of the "Castle of Otranto," he is the "Ultimus Romanorum," the author of the "Mysterious Mother," a tragedy of the highest order, and not a puling love-play. He is the father of the first romance, and of the last tragedy in our language, and surely worthy of a higher place than any living writer, be he who he may.

In speaking of the drama of Marino Faliero, I forgot to mention that the desire of preserving, though still too remotè, a nearer approach to unity than the irregularity, which is the reproach of the English theatrical compositions, permits,

defects belong, or seem to belong, to the parts themselves, and appear truer to nature. But of Kemble we may say, with reference to his acting, what the Cardinal de Retz said of the Marquis of Montrose, "that he was the only man he ever saw who reminded him of the heroes of Plutarch."

has induced me to represent the conspiracy as already formed, and the Doge acceding to it, whereas, in fact, it was of his own preparation and that of Israel Bertuccio. The other characters (except that of the duchess), incidents, and almost the time, which was wonderfully short for such a design in real life, are strictly historical, except that all the consultations took place in the palace. Had I followed this, the unity would have been better preserved; but I wished to produce the Doge in the full assembly of the conspirators, instead of monotonously placing him always in dialogue with the same individuals. For the real facts, I refer to the extracts given in the Appendix in Italian, with a translation.

MARINO FALIERO.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

An Antechamber in the Ducal Palace.

PIETRO *speaks, in entering, to* BATTISTA.

PIETRO.

Is not the messenger return'd?

BATTISTA.

Not yet;
I have sent frequently, as you commanded,
But still the signory is deep in council
And long debate on Steno's accusation.

PIETRO.

Too long—at least so thinks the Doge.

BATTISTA.

How bears he
These moments of suspense?

PIETRO.

With struggling patience.
Placed at the ducal table, cover'd o'er
With all the apparel of the state; petitions,
Dispatches, judgments, acts, reprieves, reports,
He sits as rapt in duty; but whene'er
He hears the jarring of a distant door,
Or aught that intimates a coming step,
Or murmur of a voice, his quick eye wanders,
And he will start up from his chair, then pause,
And seat himself again, and fix his gaze
Upon some edict; but I have observed
For the last hour he has not turn'd a leaf.

BATTISTA.

'Tis said he is much moved; and doubtless 'twas
Foul scorn in Steno to offend so grossly.

PIETRO.

Ay, if a poor man: Steno's a patrician,
Young, galliard, gay, and haughty.

BATTISTA.

Then you think
He will not be judged hardly.

PIETRO.

'Twere enough

He be judged justly; but 'tis not for us
To anticipate the sentence of the Forty.

BATTISTA.

And here it comes.—What news, Vincenzo?

Enter VINCENZO.

VINCENZO.

'Tis
Decided; but as yet his doom's unknown:
I saw the president in act to seal
The parchment which will bear the Forty's judgment
Unto the Doge, and hasten to inform him.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

The Ducal Chamber.

MARINO FALIERO, *Doge; and his nephew*, BERTUCCIO FALIERO.

BERTUCCIO FALIERO.

not be but they will do you justice.

DOGE.

Ay, such as the Avogadori did,

Who sent up my appeal unto the Forty
To try him by his peers, his own tribunal.

BERTUCCIO FALIERO.

His peers will scarce protect him; such an act
Would bring contempt on all authority.

DOGE.

Know you not Venice? know you not the Forty?
But we shall see anon.

BERTUCCIO FALIERO (*addressing* VINCENZO, *then entering*).

How now—what tidings?

VINCENZO.

I am charged to tell his highness that the court
Has pass'd its resolution, and that, soon
As the due forms of judgment are gone through,
The sentence will be sent up to the Doge;
In the mean time the Forty doth salute
The prince of the Republic, and entreat
His acceptation of their duty.

DOGE.

Yes—
They are wond'rous dutiful, and ever humble:
Sentence is past you say?

VINCENZO.

It is your highness:
The president was sealing it, when I
Was call'd in, that no moment might be lost
In forwarding the intimation due,
Not only to the Chief of the Republic,
But the complainant, both in one united.

BERTUCCIO FALIERO.

Are you aware, from aught you have perceived,
Of their decision?

VINCENZO.

No, my lord; you know
The secret customs of the courts in Venice.

BERTUCCIO FALIERO.

True; but there still is something given to guess,
Which a shrewd gleaner and quick eye would catch at;
A whisper, or a murmur, or an air
More or less solemn spread o'er the tribunal.
The Forty are but men—most worthy men,
And wise, and just, and cautious—this I grant—
And secret as the grave to which they doom
The guilty; but with all this, in their aspects—
At least in some, the juniors of the number—

A searching eye, an eye like yours, Vincenzo,
Would read the sentence ere it was pronounced.

VINCENZO.

My lord, I came away upon the moment,
And had no leisure to take note of that
Which pass'd among the judges, even in seeming;
My station near the accused too, Michel Steno,
Made me——

DOGE (*abruptly*).

And how look'd *he?* deliver that.

VINCENZO.

Calm, but not overcast, he stood resign'd
To the decree, whate'er it were;—but lo!
It comes, for the perusal of his highness.

Enter the SECRETARY *of the Forty*.

SECRETARY.

The high tribunal of the Forty sends
Health and respect to the Doge Faliero,
Chief magistrate of Venice, and requests
His highness to peruse and to approve
The sentence past on Michel Steno, born
Patrician, and arraign'd upon the charge

Contain'd, together with its penalty,
Within the rescript which I now present.

DOGE.

Retire and wait without.—Take thou this paper:
[*Exeunt* SECRETARY *and* VINCENZO
The misty letters vanish from my eyes;
I cannot fix them.

BERTUCCIO FALIERO.

Patience, my dear uncle:
Why do you tremble thus?—nay, doubt not, all
Will be as could be wish'd.

DOGE.

Say on.

BERTUCCIO FALIERO (*reading*).

" Decreed
" In council, without one dissenting voice,
" That Michel Steno, by his own confession,
" Guilty on the last night of Carnival
" Of having graven on the ducal throne
" The following words——"

DOGE.

Wouldst thou repeat them?
Wouldst *thou* repeat them—*thou*, a Faliero,
Harp on the deep dishonour of our house,

Dishonour'd in its chief—that chief the prince
Of Venice, first of cities?—To the sentence.

BERTUCCIO FALIERO.

Forgive me, my good lord; I will obey—
(*Reads*) "That Michel Steno be detain'd a month
"In close arrest."

DOGE.

Proceed.

BERTUCCIO FALIERO.

My lord, 'tis finish'd.

DOGE.

How, say you?—finish'd! Do I dream?—'Tis false—
Give me the paper—(*Snatches the paper, and reads*)
"'Tis decreed in council
"That Michel Steno"——Nephew, thine arm!

BERTUCCIO FALIERO.

Nay,
Cheer up, be calm; this transport is uncall'd for—
Let me seek some assistance.

DOGE.

Stop, sir—Stir not—
'Tis past.

BERTUCCIO FALIERO.

I cannot but agree with you

The sentence is too slight for the offence—
It is not honourable in the Forty
To affix so slight a penalty to that
Which was a foul affront to you, and even
To them, as being your subjects; but 'tis not
Yet without remedy: you can appeal
To them once more, or to the Avogadori,
Who, seeing that true justice is withheld,
Will now take up the cause they once declined,
And do you right upon the bold delinquent.
Think you not thus, good uncle? why do you stand
So fix'd? You heed me not:—I pray you, hear me!

DOGE (*dashing down the ducal bonnet, and offering to trample upon it, exclaims, as he is withheld by his nephew*),

Oh, that the Saracen were in Saint Mark's!
Thus would I do him homage.

BERTUCCIO FALIERO.

For the sake
Of Heaven and all its saints, my lord——

DOGE.

Away!
Oh, that the Genoese were in the port!

Oh, that the Huns whom I o'erthrew at Zara
Were ranged around the palace!

BERTUCCIO FALIERO.

'Tis not well
In Venice' Duke to say so.

DOGE.

Venice' Duke!
Who now is Duke in Venice? let me see him,
That he may do me right.

BERTUCCIO FALIERO.

If you forget
Your office, and its dignity and duty,
Remember that of man, and curb this passion.
The Duke of Venice——

DOGE (*interrupting him*).

There is no such thing—
It is a word—nay, worse—a worthless by-word:
The most despised, wrong'd, outraged, helpless wretch,
Who begs his bread, if 'tis refused by one,
May win it from another kinder heart;
But he, who is denied his right by those
Whose place it is to do no wrong, is poorer
Than the rejected beggar—he's a slave—

And that am I, and thou, and all our house,
Even from this hour; the meanest artisan
Will point the finger, and the haughty noble
May spit upon us:—where is our redress?

BERTUCCIO FALIERO.

The law, my prince——

DOGE (*interrupting him*).

You see what it has done:
I ask'd no remedy but from the law—
I sought no vengeance but redress by law—
I call'd no judges but those named by law—
As sovereign, I appeal'd unto my subjects,
The very subjects who had made me sovereign,
And gave me thus a double right to be so.
The rights of place and choice, of birth and service,
Honours and years, these scars, these hoary hairs,
The travel, toil, the perils, the fatigues,
The blood and sweat of almost eighty years,
Were weigh'd i' the balance, 'gainst the foulest stain,
The grossest insult, most contemptuous crime
Of a rank, rash patrician—and found wanting!
And this is to be borne?

BERTUCCIO FALIERO.

I say not that:—
In case your fresh appeal should be rejected,
We will find other means to make all even.

DOGE.

Appeal again! art thou my brother's son?
A scion of the house of Faliero?
The nephew of a Doge? and of that blood
Which hath already given three dukes to Venice?
But thou say'st well—we must be humble now.

BERTUCCIO FALIERO.

My princely uncle! you are too much moved:—
I grant it was a gross offence; and grossly
Left without fitting punishment; but still
This fury doth exceed the provocation,
Or any provocation: if we are wrong'd,
We will ask justice; if it be denied,
We'll take it; but may do all this in calmness—
Deep Vengeance is the daughter of deep Silence.
I have yet scarce a third part of your years,
I love our house, I honour you, its chief,
The guardian of my youth, and its instructor—
But though I understand your grief, and enter

In part of your disdain, it doth appal me
To see your anger, like our Adrian waves,
O'ersweep all bounds, and foam itself to air.

DOGE.

I tell thee—*must* I tell thee—what thy father
Would have required no words to comprehend.
Hast thou no feeling save the external sense
Of torture from the touch? hast thou no soul—
No pride—no passion—no deep sense of honour?

BERTUCCIO FALIERO.

'Tis the first time that honour has been doubted,
And were the last, from any other sceptic

DOGE.

You know the full offence of this born villain,
This creeping, coward, rank, acquitted felon,
Who threw his sting into a poisonous libel,
And on the honour of—Oh, God!—my wife,
The nearest, dearest part of all men's honour,
Left a base slur to pass from mouth to mouth
Of loose mechanics, with all coarse foul comments,
And villanous jests, and blasphemies obscene;
While sneering nobles, in more polish'd guise,
Whisper'd the tale, and smiled upon the lie

Which made me look like them—a courteous
wittol,
Patient—ay, proud, it may be, of dishonour.

BERTUCCIO FALIERO.

But still it was a lie—you knew it false,
And so did all men.

DOGE.

Nephew, the high Roman
Said "Cæsar's wife must not even be suspected,"
And put her from him.

BERTUCCIO FALIERO.

True—but in those days——

DOGE.

What is it that a Roman would not suffer,
That a Venetian prince must bear? Old Dandolo
Refused the diadem of all the Cæsars,
And wore the ducal cap I trample on,
Because 'tis now degraded.

BERTUCCIO FALIERO.

'Tis even so.

DOGE.

It is—it is:—I did not visit on
The innocent creature, thus most vilely slander'd
Because she took an old man for her lord,

For that he had been long her father's friend
And patron of her house, as if there were
No love in woman's heart but lust of youth
And beardless faces ;—I did not for this
Visit the villain's infamy on her,
But craved my country's justice on his head,
The justice due unto the humblest being
Who hath a wife whose faith is sweet to him,
Who hath a home whose hearth is dear to him,
Who hath a name whose honour's all to him,
When these are tainted by the accursing breath
Of calumny and scorn.

BERTUCCIO FALIERO.

And what redress
Did you expect as his fit punishment?

DOGE.

Death! Was I not the sovereign of the state—
Insulted on his very throne, and made
A mockery to the men who should obey me?
Was I not injured as a husband? scorn'd
As man? reviled, degraded, as a prince?
Was not offence like his a complication
Of insult and of treason?—and he lives!
Had he, instead of on the Doge's throne,

Stamp'd the same brand upon a peasant's stool,
His blood had gilt the threshold, for the carle
Had stabb'd him on the instant.

BERTUCCIO FALIERO.

Do not doubt it,
He shall not live till sunset—leave to me
The means, and calm yourself.

DOGE.

Hold, nephew! this
Would have sufficed but yesterday: at present
I have no further wrath against this man.

BERTUCCIO FALIERO.

What mean you? is not the offence redoubled
By this most rank—I will not say—acquittal,
For it is worse, being full acknowledgment
Of the offence, and leaving it unpunish'd?

DOGE.

It *is redoubled*, but not now by him:
The Forty hath decreed a month's arrest—
We must obey the Forty.

BERTUCCIO FALIERO.

Obey *them!*
Who have forgot their duty to the sovereign?

DOGE.

Why, yes ;—boy, you perceive it then at last :
Whether as fellow-citizen who sues
For justice, or as sovereign who commands it,
They have defrauded me of both my rights
(For here the sovereign is a citizen) ;
But, notwithstanding, harm not thou a hair
Of Steno's head—he shall not wear it long.

BERTUCCIO FALIERO.

Not twelve hours longer, had you left to me
The mode and means : if you had calmly heard me,
I never meant this miscreant should escape,
But wish'd you to repress such gusts of passion,
That we more surely might devise together
His taking off.

DOGE.

No, nephew, he must live ;
At least, just now—a life so vile as his
Were nothing at this hour ; in th' olden time
Some sacrifices ask'd a single victim,
Great expiations had a hecatomb.

BERTUCCIO FALIERO.

Your wishes are my law ; and yet I fain

Would prove to you how near unto my heart
The honour of our house must ever be.

DOGE.

Fear not; you shall have time and place of proof:
But be not thou too rash, as I have been.
I am ashamed of my own anger now;
I pray you, pardon me.

BERTUCCIO FALIERO.

Why that's my uncle!
The leader, and the statesman, and the chief
Of commonwealths, and sovereign of himself!
I wonder'd to perceive you so forget
All prudence in your fury, at these years,
Although the cause——

DOGE.

Ay, think upon the cause—
Forget it not:—When you lie down to rest,
Let it be black among your dreams; and when
The morn returns, so let it stand between
The sun and you, as an ill-omen'd cloud
Upon a summer-day of festival:
So will it stand to me;—but speak not, stir not,—
Leave all to me;—we shall have much to do,
And you shall have a part.—But now retire,
'Tis fit I were alone.

BERTUCCIO FALIERO,

(*Taking up and placing the ducal bonnet on the table*).

Ere I depart,
I pray you to resume what you have spurn'd,
Till you can change it haply for a crown.
And now I take my leave, imploring you
In all things to rely upon my duty
As doth become your near and faithful kinsman,
And not less loyal citizen and subject.

[*Exit* BERTUCCIO FALIERO.

DOGE (*solus*).

Adieu, my worthy nephew.—Hollow bauble!

(*Taking up the ducal cap*.

Beset with all the thorns that line a crown,
Without investing the insulted brow
With the all-swaying majesty of kings;
Thou idle, gilded, and degraded toy,
Let me resume thee as I would a vizor. [*Puts it on*.
How my brain aches beneath thee! and my temples
Throb feverish under thy dishonest weight.
Could I not turn thee to a diadem?
Could I not shatter the Briarean sceptre
Which in this hundred-handed senate rules,

Making the people nothing, and the prince
A pageant? In my life I have achieved
Tasks not less difficult—achieved for them,
Who thus repay me!—Can I not requite them?
Oh, for one year! Oh, but for even a day
Of my full youth, while yet my body served
My soul as serves the generous steed his lord!
I would have dash'd amongst them, asking few
In aid to overthrow these swoln patricians;
But now I must look round for other hands
To serve this hoary head;—but it shall plan
In such a sort as will not leave the task
Herculean, though as yet 'tis but a chaos
Of darkly-brooding thoughts: my fancy is
In her first work, more nearly to the light
Holding the sleeping images of things,
For the selection of the pausing judgment.—
The troops are few in——

Enter VINCENZO.

There is one without
Craves audience of your highness.

DOGE.

I'm unwell—

I can see no one, not even a patrician—
Let him refer his business to the council.

VINCENZO.

My lord, I will deliver your reply;
It cannot much import—he's a plebeian,
The master of a galley, I believe.

DOGE.

How! did you say the patron of a galley?
That is—I mean—a servant of the state:
Admit him, he may be on public service.

[*Exit* VINCENZO.

DOGE (*solus*).

This patron may be sounded; I will try him.
I know the people to be discontented;
They have cause, since Sapienza's adverse day,
When Genoa conquer'd: they have further cause,
Since they are nothing in the state, and in
The city worse than nothing—mere machines,
To serve the nobles' most patrician pleasure.
The troops have long arrears of pay, oft promised,
And murmur deeply—any hope of change
Will draw them forward: they shall pay themselves
With plunder:—but the priests—I doubt the priesthood

Will not be with us; they have hated me
Since that rash hour, when, madden'd with the
drone,
I smote the tardy bishop at Treviso, [1]
Quickening his holy march: yet, ne'ertheless,
They may be won, at least their chief at Rome,
By some well-timed concessions; but, above
All things, I must be speedy; at my hour
Of twilight little light of life remains.
Could I free Venice, and avenge my wrongs,
I had lived too long, and willingly would sleep
Next moment with my sires; and, wanting this,
Better that sixty of my fourscore years
Had been already where—how soon, I care not—
The whole must be extinguish'd;—better that
They ne'er had been, than drag me on to be
The thing these arch-oppressors fain would make
me.
Let me consider—of efficient troops
There are three thousand posted at——

Enter VINCENZO *and* ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

VINCENZO.

May it please

Your highness, the same patron whom I spake of
Is here to crave your patience.

DOGE.

Leave the chamber,
Vincenzo.—

[*Exit* VINCENZO.

Sir, you may advance—what would you?

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

Redress.

DOGE.

Of whom?

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

Of God and of the Doge.

DOGE.

Alas! my friend, you seek it of the twain
Of least respect and interest in Venice.
You must address the council.

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

'Twere in vain;
For he who injured me is one of them.

DOGE.

There's blood upon thy face—how came it there?

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

'Tis mine, and not the first I've shed for Venice,

But the first shed by a Venetian hand:
A noble smote me.

DOGE.

Doth he live?

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

Not long—
But for the hope I had and have, that you,
My prince, yourself a soldier, will redress
Him, whom the laws of discipline and Venice
Permit not to protect himself; if not—
I say no more.

DOGE.

But something you would do—
Is it not so?

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

I am a man, my lord.

DOGE.

Why, so is he who smote you.

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

He is call'd so;
Nay, more, a noble one—at least, in Venice:
But since he hath forgotten that I am one,
And treats me like a brute, the brute may turn—
'Tis said the worm will.

DOGE.

Say—his name and lineage?

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

Barbaro.

DOGE.

What was the cause? or the pretext?

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

I am the chief of the arsenal, employ'd
At present in repairing certain galleys
But roughly used by the Genoese last year.
This morning comes the noble Barbaro
Full of reproof, because our artisans
Had left some frivolous order of his house,
To execute the state's decree; I dared
To justify the men—he raised his hand;—
Behold my blood! the first time it e'er flow'd
Dishonourably.

DOGE.

Have you long time served?

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

So long as to remember Zara's siege,
And fight beneath the chief who beat the Huns
there,
Sometime my general, now the Doge Faliero.—

DOGE.

How! are we comrades?—the state's ducal robes
Sit newly on me, and you were appointed
Chief of the arsenal ere I came from Rome,
So that I recognised you not. Who placed you?

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

The late Doge; keeping still my old command
As patron of a galley: my new office
Was given as the reward of certain scars
(So was your predecessor pleased to say):
I little thought his bounty would conduct me
To his successor as a helpless plaintiff,
At least, in such a cause.

DOGE.

Are you much hurt?

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

Irreparably in my self-esteem.

DOGE.

Speak out; fear nothing: being stung at heart,
What would you do to be revenged on this man?

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

That which I dare not name, and yet will do.

DOGE.

Then wherefore came you here?

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

I come for justice,
Because my general is Doge, and will not
See his old soldier trampled on. Had any,
Save Faliero, fill'd the ducal throne,
This blood had been wash'd out in other blood.

DOGE.

You come to me for justice—unto *me!*
The Doge of Venice, and I cannot give it:
I cannot even obtain it—'twas denied
To me most solemnly an hour ago.

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

How says your highness?

DOGE.

Steno is condemn'd
To a month's confinement.

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

What! the same who dared
To stain the ducal throne with those foul words,
That have cried shame to every ear in Venice?

DOGE.

Ay, doubtless they have echo'd o'er the arsenal,
Keeping due time with every hammer's clink
As a good jest to jolly artisans;

Or making chorus to the creaking oar,
In the vile tune of every galley slave,
Who, as he sung the merry stave, exulted
He was not a shamed dotard, like the Doge.

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

Is it possible? a month's imprisonment!
No more for Steno?

DOGE.

You have heard the offence.
And now you know his punishment; and then
You ask redress of *me!* Go to the Forty,
Who pass'd the sentence upon Michel Steno,
They'll do as much by Barbaro, no doubt.

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

Ah! dared I speak my feelings!

DOGE.

Give them breath.
Mine have no further outrage to endure.

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

Then, in a word, it rests but on your word
To punish and avenge—I will not say
My petty wrong, for what is a mere blow,
However vile, to such a thing as I am?—
But the base insult done your state and person.

DOGE.

You overrate my power, which is a pageant.
This cap is not the monarch's crown; these robes
Might move compassion, like a beggar's rags;
Nay, more, a beggar's are his own, and these
But lent to the poor puppet, who must play
Its part with all its empire in this ermine.

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

Wouldst thou be king?

DOGE.

Yes—of a happy people.

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

Wouldst thou be sovereign lord of Venice?

DOGE.

Ay,
If that the people shared that sovereignty,
So that nor they nor I were further slaves
To this o'ergrown aristocratic hydra,
The poisonous heads of whose envenom'd body
Have breathed a pestilence upon us all.

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

Yet, thou wast born and still hast lived patrician.

DOGE.

In evil hour was I so born; my birth

Hath made me Doge to be insulted: but
I lived and toil'd a soldier and a servant
Of Venice and her people, not the senate;
Their good and my own honour were my guerdon.
I have fought and bled; commanded, ay, and
conquer'd;
Have made and marr'd peace oft in embassies,
As it might chance to be our country's 'vantage.
Have traversed land and sea in constant duty,
Through almost sixty years, and still for Venice,
My fathers' and my birthplace, whose dear spires,
Rising at distance o'er the blue Lagoon,
It was reward enough for me to view
Once more; but not for any knot of men,
Nor sect, nor faction, did I bleed or sweat!
But would you know why I have done all this?
Ask of the bleeding pelican why she
Hath ripp'd her bosom? Had the bird a voice,
She'd tell thee 'twas for *all* her little ones.

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

And yet they made thee duke.

DOGE.

They made me so,
I sought it not, the flattering fetters met me

Returning from my Roman embassy,
And never having hitherto refused
Toil, charge, or duty for the state, I did not,
At these late years, decline what was the highest
Of all in seeming, but of all most base
In what we have to do and to endure:
Bear witness for me thou, my injured subject,
When I can neither right myself nor thee.

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

You shall do both, if you possess the will;
And many thousands more not less oppress'd,
Who wait but for a signal——will you give it?

DOGE.

You speak in riddles.

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

Which shall soon be read,
At peril of my life, if you disdain not
To lend a patient ear.

DOGE.

Say on.

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

Not thou,
Nor I alone, are injured and abused,
Contemn'd and trampled on, but the whole people

Groan with the strong conception of their wrongs:
The foreign soldiers in the senate's pay
Are discontented for their long arrears;
The native mariners and civic troops
Feel with their friends; for who is he amongst
them
Whose brethren, parents, children, wives, or sisters,
Have not partook oppression, or pollution,
From the patricians? And the hopeless war
Against the Genoese, which is still maintain'd
With the plebeian blood, and treasure wrung
From their hard earnings, has inflamed them further:
Even now—but, I forget that, speaking thus,
Perhaps I pass the sentence of my death!

DOGE.

And, suffering what thou hast done, fear'st thou
death?
Be silent then, and live on, to be beaten
By those for whom thou hast bled.

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

No, I will speak
At every hazard; and if Venice' Doge

Should turn delator, be the shame on him,
And sorrow too; for he will lose far more
Than I.

DOGE.

From me fear nothing; out with it.

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

Know, then, that there are met and sworn in secret
A band of brethren, valiant hearts and true;
Men who have proved all fortunes, and have long
Grieved over that of Venice, and have right
To do so; having served her in all climes,
And having rescued her from foreign foes,
Would do the same from those within her walls.
They are not numerous, nor yet too few
For their great purpose; they have arms, and means,
And hearts, and hopes, and faith, and patient courage.

DOGE.

For what then do they pause?

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

An hour to strike.

DOGE (*aside*).

Saint Mark's shall strike that hour!

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

I now have placed
My life, my honour, all my earthly hopes
Within thy power, but in the firm belief
That injuries like ours, sprung from one cause,
Will generate one vengeance: should it be so,
Be our chief now—our sovereign hereafter.

DOGE.

How many are ye?

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

I'll not answer that
Till I am answer'd.

DOGE.

How, Sir! do you menace?

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

No; I affirm. I have betray'd myself;
But there's no torture in the mystic wells
Which undermine your palace, nor in those
Not less appalling cells, the "leaden roofs,"
To force a single name from me of others.
The Pozzi and the Piombi were in vain;

They might wring blood from me, but treachery
never.
And I would pass the fearful "Bridge of Sighs,"
Joyous that mine must be the last that e'er
Would echo o'er the Stygian wave which flows
Between the murderers and the murder'd, washing
The prison and the palace walls: there are
Those who would live to think on't, and avenge
me.

DOGE.

If such your power and purpose, why come here
To sue for justice, being in the course
To do yourself due right?

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

Because the man
Who claims protection from authority,
Showing his confidence and his submission
To that authority, can hardly be
Suspected of combining to destroy it.
Had I sate down too humbly with this blow,
A moody brow and mutter'd threats had made me
A mark'd man to the Forty's inquisition?
But loud complaint, however angrily
It shapes its phrase, is little to be fear'd,

And less distrusted. But, besides all this,
I had another reason.

DOGE.

What was that?

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

Some rumours that the Doge was greatly moved
By the reference of the Avogadori
Of Michel Steno's sentence to the Forty
Had reach'd me. I had served you, honour'd you,
And felt that you were dangerously insulted,
Being of an order of such spirits, as
Requite tenfold both good and evil: 'twas
My wish to prove and urge you to redress.
Now you know all; and that I speak the truth,
My peril be the proof.

DOGE.

You have deeply ventured;
But all must do so who would greatly win:
Thus far I'll answer you—your secret's safe.

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

And is this all?

DOGE.

Unless with all entrusted,
What would you have me answer?

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

I would have you
Trust him who leaves his life in trust with you.

DOGE.

But I must know your plan, your names, and
numbers;
The last may then be doubled, and the former
Matured and strengthen'd.

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

We're enough already;
You are the sole ally we covet now.

DOGE.

But bring me to the knowledge of your chiefs.

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

That shall be done upon your formal pledge
To keep the faith that we will pledge to you.

DOGE.

When? where?

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

This night I'll bring to your apartment
Two of the principals; a greater number
Were hazardous.

DOGE.

Stay, I must think of this.

What if I were to trust myself amongst you,
And leave the palace?

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

You must come alone.

DOGE.

With but my nephew.

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

Not were he your son.

DOGE.

Wretch! darest thou name my son? He died in arms,
At Sapienza, for this faithless state.
Oh! that he were alive, and I in ashes!
Or that he were alive ere I be ashes!
I should not need the dubious aid of strangers.

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

Not one of all those strangers whom thou doubtest,
But will regard thee with a filial feeling,
So that thou keep'st a father's faith with them.

DOGE.

The die is cast. Where is the place of meeting?

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

At midnight I will be alone and mask'd
Where'er your highness pleases to direct me,

To wait your coming, and conduct you where
You shall receive our homage, and pronounce
Upon our project.

DOGE.

At what hour arises
The moon?

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

Late, but the atmosphere is thick and dusky;
'Tis a syrocco.

DOGE.

At the midnight hour, then,
Near to the church where sleep my sires; the same,
Twin-named from the apostles John and Paul;
A gondola,[3] with one oar only, will
Lurk in the narrow channel which glides by.
Be there.

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

I will not fail.

DOGE.

And now retire——

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

In the full hope your highness will not falter
In your great purpose. Prince, I take my leave.

[*Exit* ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

DOGE (*solus*).

At midnight, by the church Saints John and Paul,
Where sleep my noble fathers, I repair—
To what? to hold a council in the dark
With common ruffians leagued to ruin states!
And will not my great sires leap from the vault,
Where lie two doges who preceded me,
And pluck me down amongst them? Would they
could!
For I should rest in honour with the honour'd.
Alas! I must not think of them, but those
Who have made me thus unworthy of a name,
Noble and brave as aught of consular
On Roman marbles; but I will redeem it
Back to its antique lustre in our annals,
By sweet revenge on all that's base in Venice,
And freedom to the rest, or leave it black
To all the growing calumnies of time,
Which never spare the fame of him who fails,
But try the Cæsar, or the Cataline,
By the true touchstone of desert—success.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

An Apartment in the Ducal Palace.

ANGIOLINA (*wife of the Doge*) *and* MARIANNA.

ANGIOLINA.

What was the Doge's answer?

MARIANNA.

That he was
That moment summon'd to a conference;
But 'tis by this time ended. I perceived
Not long ago the senators embarking;
And the last gondola may now be seen
Gliding into the throng of barks which stud
The glittering waters.

ANGIOLINA.

Would he were return'd!
He has been much disquieted of late;
And Time, which has not tamed his fiery spirit,
Nor yet enfeebled even his mortal frame,
Which seems to be more nourish'd by a soul

So quick and restless that it would consume
Less hardy clay—Time has but little power
On his resentments or his griefs. Unlike
To other spirits of his order, who,
In the first burst of passion, pour away
Their wrath or sorrow, all things wear in him
An aspect of eternity: his thoughts,
His feelings, passions, good or evil, all
Have nothing of old age; and his bold brow
Bears but the scars of mind, the thoughts of years,
Not their decrepitude: and he of late
Has been more agitated than his wont.
Would he were come! for I alone have power
Upon his troubled spirit.

MARIANNA.

It is true,
His highness has of late been greatly moved
By the affront of Steno, and with cause,
But the offender doubtless even now
Is doom'd to expiate his rash insult with
Such chastisement as will enforce respect
To female virtue, and to noble blood.

ANGIOLINA.

'Twas a gross insult; but I heed it not;

For the rash scorner's falsehood in itself,
But for the effect, the deadly deep impression
Which it has made upon Faliero's soul,
The proud, the fiery, the austere—austere
To all save me! I tremble when I think
To what it may conduct.

MARIANNA.

Assuredly
The Doge can not suspect you?

ANGIOLINA.

Suspect *me!*
Why Steno dared not: when he scrawl'd his lie,
Groveling by stealth in the moon's glimmering light,
His own still conscience smote him for the act,
And every shadow on the walls frown'd shame
Upon his coward calumny.

MARIANNA.

'Twere fit
He should be punish'd grievously.

ANGIOLINA.

He is so.

MARIANNA.

What! is the sentence past? is he condemn'd?

ANGIOLINA.

I know not that, but he has been detected.

MARIANNA.

And deem you this enough for such foul scorn?

ANGIOLINA.

I would not be a judge in my own cause,
Nor do I know what sense of punishment
May reach the soul of ribalds such as Steno;
But if his insults sink no deeper in
The minds of the inquisitors than they
Have ruffled mine, he will, for all acquittance,
Be left to his own shamelessness or shame.

MARIANNA.

Some sacrifice is due to slander'd virtue.

ANGIOLINA.

Why, what is virtue if it needs a victim?
Or if it must depend upon men's words?
The dying Roman said, "'twas but a name:"
It were indeed no more, if human breath
Could make or mar it.

MARIANNA.

Yet full many a dame,
Stainless and faithful, would feel all the wrong
Of such a slander; and less rigid ladies,

Such as abound in Venice, would be loud
And all-inexorable in their cry
For justice.

ANGIOLINA.

This but proves it is the name
And not the quality they prize: the first
Have found it a hard task to hold their honour,
If they require it to be blazon'd forth;
And those who have not kept it, seek its seeming
As they would look out for an ornament
Of which they feel the want, but not because
They think it so; they live in others' thoughts,
And would seem honest as they must seem fair.

MARIANNA.

You have strange thoughts for a patrician dame.

ANGIOLINA.

And yet they were my father's; with his name,
The sole inheritance he left.

MARIANNA.

You want none;
Wife to a prince, the chief of the republic.

ANGIOLINA.

I should have sought none though a peasant's bride,
But feel not less the love and gratitude

Due to my father, who bestow'd my hand
Upon his early, tried, and trusted friend,
The Count Val di Marino, now our Doge.

MARIANNA.

And with that hand did he bestow your heart?

ANGIOLINA.

He did so, or it had not been bestow'd.

MARIANNA.

Yet this strange disproportion in your years,
And, let me add, disparity of tempers,
Might make the world doubt whether such an union
Could make you wisely, permanently happy.

ANGIOLINA.

The world will think with worldlings; but my heart
Has still been in my duties, which are many,
But never difficult.

MARIANNA.

And do you love him?

ANGIOLINA.

I love all noble qualities which merit
Love, and I loved my father, who first taught me
To single out what we should love in others,
And to subdue all tendency to lend
The best and purest feelings of our nature

To baser passions. He bestow'd my hand
Upon Faliero: he had known him noble,
Brave, generous, rich in all the qualities
Of soldier, citizen, and friend; in all
Such have I found him as my father said.
His faults are those that dwell in the high bosoms
Of men who have commanded; too much pride,
And the deep passions fiercely foster'd by
The uses of patricians and a life
Spent in the storms of state and war; and also
From the quick sense of honour, which becomes
A duty to a certain sign, a vice
When overstrain'd, and this I fear in him.
And then he has been rash from his youth upwards,
Yet temper'd by redeeming nobleness
In such sort, that the wariest of republics
Has lavish'd all its chief employs upon him,
From his first fight to his last embassy,
From which on his return the dukedom met him.

MARIANNA.

But, previous to this marriage, had your heart
Ne'er beat for any of the noble youth,
Such as in years had been more meet to match

Beauty like yours? or since have you ne'er seen
One, who, if your fair hand were still to give,
Might now pretend to Loredano's daughter?

ANGIOLINA.

I answer'd your first question when I said
I married.

MARIANNA.

And the second?

ANGIOLINA.

Needs no answer.

MARIANNA.

I pray you pardon, if I have offended.

ANGIOLINA.

I feel no wrath, but some surprise: I knew not
That wedded bosoms could permit themselves
To ponder upon what they *now* might choose,
Or aught, save their past choice.

MARIANNA.

'Tis their past choice
That far too often makes them deem they would
Now choose more wisely, could they cancel it.

ANGIOLINA.

It may be so. I knew not of such thoughts.

MARIANNA.

Here comes the Doge—shall I retire?

ANGIOLINA.

It may
Be better you should quit me; he seems wrapt
In thought.—How pensively he takes his way!
[*Exit* MARIANNA.

Enter the DOGE *and* PIETRO.

DOGE (*musing*).

There is a certain Philip Calendaro
Now in the arsenal, who holds command
Of eighty men, and has great influence
Besides on all the spirits of his comrades;
This man, I hear, is bold and popular,
Sudden and daring, and yet secret: 'twould
Be well that he were won: I needs must hope
That Israel Bertuccio has secured him,
But fain would be——

PIETRO.

My lord, pray pardon me
For breaking in upon your meditation;
The Senator Bertuccio, your kinsman,

Charged me to follow and inquire your pleasure
To fix an hour when he may speak with you.

DOGE.

At sunset.—Stay a moment—let me see—
Say in the second hour of night. [*Exit* PIETRO.

ANGIOLINA.

My lord!

DOGE.

My dearest child, forgive me—why delay
So long approaching me?—I saw you not.

ANGIOLINA.

You were absorb'd in thought, and he who now
Has parted from you might have words of weight
To bear you from the senate.

DOGE.

From the senate?

ANGIOLINA.

I would not interrupt him in his duty
And theirs.

DOGE.

The senate's duty! you mistake;
'Tis we who owe all service to the senate.

ANGIOLINA.

I thought the Duke had held command in Venice.

DOGE.

He shall.—But let that pass.—We will be jocund.
How fares it with you? have you been abroad?
The day is overcast, but the calm wave
Favours the gondolier's light skimming oar;
Or have you held a levee of your friends?
Or has your music made you solitary?
Say—is there aught that you would will within
The little sway now left the Duke? or aught
Of fitting splendour, or of honest pleasure,
Social or lonely, that would glad your heart,
To compensate for many a dull hour, wasted
On an old man oft moved with many cares?
Speak, and 'tis done.

ANGIOLINA.

You're ever kind to me—
I have nothing to desire, or to request,
Except to see you oftener and calmer.

DOGE.

Calmer?

ANGIOLINA.

Ay, calmer, my good lord.—Ah, why
Do you still keep apart, and walk alone,
And let such strong emotions stamp your brow,

As, not betraying their full import, yet
Disclose too much?

DOGE.

Disclose too much!—of what?
What is there to disclose?

ANGIOLINA.

A heart so ill
At ease.

DOGE.

'Tis nothing, child.—But in the state
You know what daily cares oppress all those
Who govern this precarious commonwealth;
Now suffering from the Genoese without,
And malcontents within—'tis this which makes me
More pensive and less tranquil than my wont.

ANGIOLINA.

Yet this existed long before, and never
Till in these late days did I see you thus.
Forgive me: there is something at your heart
More than the mere discharge of public duties,
Which long use and a talent like to yours
Have render'd light, nay, a necessity,
To keep your mind from stagnating. 'Tis not
In hostile states, nor perils, thus to shake you;

You, who have stood all storms and never sunk,
And climb'd up to the pinnacle of power
And never fainted by the way, and stand
Upon it, and can look down steadily
Along the depth beneath, and ne'er feel dizzy.
Were Genoa's galleys riding in the port,
Were civil fury raging in Saint Mark's,
You are not to be wrought on, but would fall,
As you have risen, with an unalter'd brow:
Your feelings now are of a different kind;
Something has stung your pride, not patriotism.

DOGE.

Pride! Angiolina? Alas! none is left me.

ANGIOLINA.

Yes—the same sin that overthrew the angels,
And of all sins most easily besets
Mortals the nearest to the angelic nature:
The vile are only vain; the great are proud.

DOGE.

I *had* the pride of honour, of *your* honour,
Deep at my heart—But let us change the theme.

ANGIOLINA.

Ah no!—As I have ever shared your kindness
In all things else, let me not be shut out

From your distress: were it of public import,
You know I never sought, would never seek
To win a word from you; but feeling now
Your grief is private, it belongs to me
To lighten or divide it. Since the day
When foolish Steno's ribaldry detected
Unfix'd your quiet, you are greatly changed,
And I would soothe you back to what you were.

DOGE.

To what I was!—Have you heard Steno's sentence?

ANGIOLINA.

No.

DOGE.

A month's arrest.

ANGIOLINA.

Is it not enough?

DOGE.

Enough!—Yes, for a drunken galley slave,
Who, stung by stripes, may murmur at his master;
But not for a deliberate, false, cool villain,
Who stains a lady's and a prince's honour
Even on the throne of his authority.

ANGIOLINA.

There seems to me enough in the conviction

Of a patrician guilty of a falsehood:
All other punishment were light unto
His loss of honour.

DOGE.

Such men have no honour;
They have but their vile lives—and these are spared.

ANGIOLINA.

You would not have him die for this offence?

DOGE.

Not *now*:—being still alive, I'd have him live
Long as *he* can; he has ceased to merit death,
The guilty saved hath damn'd his hundred judges,
And he is pure, for now his crime is theirs.

ANGIOLINA.

Oh! had this false and flippant libeller
Shed his young blood for his absurd lampoon,
Ne'er from that moment could this breast have known
A joyous hour, or dreamless slumber more.

DOGE.

Does not the law of Heaven say blood for blood?
And he who *taints* kills more than he who sheds it.
Is it the *pain* of blows, or *shame* of blows,

That makes such deadly to the sense of man?
Do not the laws of man say blood for honour?
And less than honour, for a little gold?
Say not the laws of nations blood for treason?
Is 't nothing to have fill'd these veins with poison
For their once healthful current? is it nothing
To have stain'd your name and mine? the noblest
names?
Is 't nothing to have brought into contempt
A prince before his people? to have fail'd
In the respect accorded by mankind
To youth in woman, and old age in man?
To virtue in your sex, and dignity
In ours?—But let them look to it who have saved
him.

ANGIOLINA.

Heaven bids us to forgive our enemies.

DOGE.

Doth Heaven forgive her own? Is Satan saved
From wrath eternal?

ANGIOLINA.

Do not speak thus wildly—
Heaven will alike forgive you and your foes.

DOGE.

Amen! May Heaven forgive them.

ANGIOLINA.

And will you?

DOGE.

Yes, when they are in Heaven!

ANGIOLINA.

And not till then?

DOGE.

What matters my forgiveness? an old man's,
Worn out, scorn'd, spurn'd, abused; what matters then
My pardon more than my resentment? both
Being weak and worthless? I have lived too long.
But let us change the argument.—My child!
My injured wife, the child of Loredano,
The brave, the chivalrous, how little deem'd
Thy father, wedding thee unto his friend,
That he was linking thee to shame!—Alas!
Shame without sin, for thou art faultless. Hadst thou
But had a different husband, *any* husband
In Venice save the Doge, this blight, this brand,
This blasphemy had never fallen upon thee.

So young, so beautiful, so good, so pure,
To suffer this, and yet be unavenged!

ANGIOLINA.

I am too well avenged, for you still love me,
And trust, and honour me; and all men know
That you are just, and I am true: what more
Could I require, or you command?

DOGE.

'Tis well,
And may be better; but whate'er betide,
Be thou at least kind to my memory.

ANGIOLINA.

Why speak you thus?

DOGE.

It is no matter why;
But I would still, whatever others think,
Have your respect both now and in my grave.

ANGIOLINA.

Why should you doubt it? has it ever fail'd?

DOGE.

Come hither, child; I would a word with you.
Your father was my friend; unequal fortune
Made him my debtor for some courtesies
Which bind the good more firmly: when opprest

With his last malady, he will'd our union:
It was not to repay me, long repaid
Before by his great loyalty in friendship;
His object was to place your orphan beauty
In honourable safety from the perils
Which, in this scorpion nest of vice, assail
A lonely and undower'd maid. I did not
Think with him, but would not oppose the thought
Which soothed his death-bed.

ANGIOLINA.

I have not forgotten
The nobleness with which you bade me speak
If my young heart held any preference
Which would have made me happier; nor your offer
To make my dowry equal to the rank
Of aught in Venice, and forego all claim
My father's last injunction gave you.

DOGE.

Thus,
'Twas not a foolish dotard's vile caprice,
Nor the false edge of aged appetite,
Which made me covetous of girlish beauty,
And a young bride: for in my fieriest youth

I sway'd such passions; nor was this my age
Infected with that leprosy of lust
Which taints the hoariest years of vicious men,
Making them ransack to the very last
The dregs of pleasure for their vanish'd joys;
Or buy in selfish marriage some young victim,
Too helpless to refuse a state that's honest,
Too feeling not to know herself a wretch.
Our wedlock was not of this sort; you had
Freedom from me to choose, and urged in answer
Your father's choice.

ANGIOLINA.

I did so; I would do so
In face of earth and heaven; for I have never
Repented for my sake; sometimes for yours,
In pondering o'er your late disquietudes.

DOGE.

I knew my heart would never treat you harshly;
I knew my days could not disturb you long;
And then the daughter of my earliest friend,
His worthy daughter, free to choose again,
Wealthier and wiser, in the ripest bloom
Of womanhood, more skilful to select
By passing these probationary years;

Inheriting a prince's name and riches;
Secured, by the short penance of enduring
An old man for some summers, against all
That law's chicane or envious kinsmen might
Have urged against her right: my best friend's child
Would choose more fitly in respect of years,
And not less truly in a faithful heart.

ANGIOLINA.

My lord, I look'd but to my father's wishes,
Hallow'd by his last words, and to my heart
For doing all its duties, and replying
With faith to him with whom I was affianced.
Ambitious hopes ne'er cross'd my dreams, and should
The hour you speak of come, it will be seen so.

DOGE.

I do believe you; and I know you true:
For love, romantic love, which in my youth
I knew to be illusion, and ne'er saw
Lasting, but often fatal, it had been
No lure for me, in my most passionate days,
And could not be so now, did such exist.
But such respect, and mildly paid regard
As a true feeling for your welfare, and

A free compliance with all honest wishes;
A kindness to your virtues, watchfulness
Not shown, but shadowing o'er such little failings
As youth is apt in; so as not to check
Rashly, but win you from them ere you knew
You had been won, but thought the change your
choice;
A pride not in your beauty, but your conduct,—
A trust in you—a patriarchal love,
And not a doting homage—friendship, faith—
Such estimation in your eyes as these
Might claim, I hoped for.

ANGIOLINA.

And have ever had.

DOGE.

I think so. For the difference in our years,
You knew it, choosing me, and chose: I trusted
Not to my qualities, nor would have faith
In such, nor outward ornaments of nature,
Were I still in my five-and-twentieth spring:
I trusted to the blood of Loredano
Pure in your veins; I trusted to the soul
God gave you—to the truths your father taught
you—

To your belief in heaven—to your mild virtues—
To your own faith and honour, for my own.

ANGIOLINA.

You have done well.—I thank you for that trust,
Which I have never for one moment ceased
To honour you the more for.

DOGE.

Where is honour,
Innate and precept-strengthen'd, 'tis the rock
Of faith connubial; where it is not—where
Light thoughts are lurking, or the vanities
Of worldly pleasure rankle in the heart,
Or sensual throbs convulse it, well I know
'Twere hopeless for humanity to dream
Of honesty in such infected blood,
Although 'twere wed to him it covets most:
An incarnation of the poet's god
In all his marble-chisell'd beauty, or
The demi-deity, Alcides, in
His majesty of superhuman manhood,
Would not suffice to bind where virtue is not;
It is consistency which forms and proves it:
Vice cannot fix, and virtue cannot change.
The once fallen woman must for ever fall;

For vice must have variety, while virtue
Stands like the sun, and all which rolls around
Drinks life, and light, and glory from her aspect.

ANGIOLINA.

And seeing, feeling thus this truth in others,
(I pray you pardon me); but wherefore yield you
To the most fierce of fatal passions, and
Disquiet your great thoughts with restless hate
Of such a thing as Steno?

DOGE.

You mistake me.
It is not Steno who could move me thus;
Had it been so, he should—but let that pass.

ANGIOLINA.

What is 't you feel so deeply, then, even now?

DOGE.

The violated majesty of Venice,
At once insulted in her lord and laws.

ANGIOLINA.

Alas! why will you thus consider it?

DOGE.

I have thought on 't till—but let me lead you back
To what I urged; all these things being noted,
I wedded you; the world then did me justice

Upon the motive, and my conduct proved
They did me right, while yours was all to praise:
You had all freedom—all respect—all trust
From me and mine; and born of those who made
Princes at home, and swept kings from their
thrones
On foreign shores, in all things you appear'd
Worthy to be our first of native dames.

ANGIOLINA.

To what does this conduct?

DOGE.

To thus much—that
A miscreant's angry breath may blast it all—
A villain, whom for his unbridled bearing,
Even in the midst of our great festival,
I caused to be conducted forth, and taught
How to demean himself in ducal chambers,
A wretch like this may leave upon the wall
The blighting venom of his sweltering heart,
And this shall spread itself in general poison;
And woman's innocence, man's honour, pass
Into a by-word; and the doubly felon
(Who first insulted virgin modesty
By a gross affront to your attendant damsels,

Amidst the noblest of our dames in public)
Requite himself for his most just expulsion,
By blackening publicly his sovereign's consort,
And be absolved by his upright compeers.

ANGIOLINA.

But he has been condemn'd into captivity.

DOGE.

For such as him a dungeon were acquittal,
And his brief term of mock-arrest will pass
Within a palace. But I've done with him;
The rest must be with you.

ANGIOLINA.

With me, my lord?

DOGE.

Yes, Angiolina. Do not marvel, I
Have let this prey upon me till I feel
My life cannot be long; and fain would have you
Regard the injunctions you will find within
This scroll. (*Giving her a paper*)——Fear not; they are for your advantage:
Read them hereafter, at the fitting hour.

ANGIOLINA.

My lord, in life, and after life, you shall
Be honour'd still by me: but may your days

Be many yet—and happier than the present!
This passion will give way, and you will be
Serene, and what you should be—what you were.

DOGE.

I will be what I should be, or be nothing;
But never more—oh! never, never more,
O'er the few days or hours which yet await
The blighted old age of Faliero, shall
Sweet quiet shed her sunset! Never more
Those summer shadows rising from the past
Of a not ill-spent nor inglorious life,
Mellowing the last hours as the night approaches,
Shall soothe me to my moment of long rest.
I had but little more to ask, or hope,
Save the regards due to the blood and sweat,
And the soul's labour through which I had toil'd
To make my country honour'd. As her servant—
Her servant, though her chief—I would have gone
Down to my fathers with a name serene
And pure as theirs; but this has been denied me.—
Would I had died at Zara!

ANGIOLINA.

There you saved
The state; then live to save her still. A day,

Another day like that would be the best
Reproof to them and sole revenge for you.

DOGE.

But one such day occurs within an age;
My life is little less than one, and 'tis
Enough for Fortune to have granted *once*,
That which scarce one more favour'd citizen
May win in many states and years. But why
Thus speak I? Venice has forgot that day—
Then why should I remember it?—Farewell,
Sweet Angiolina! I must to my cabinet;
There's much for me to do—and the hour hastens.

ANGIOLINA.

Remember what you were.

DOGE.

It were in vain!
Joy's recollection is no longer joy,
While Sorrow's memory is a sorrow still.

ANGIOLINA.

At least, whate'er may urge, let me implore
That you will take some little pause of rest:
Your sleep for many nights has been so turbid,
That it had been relief to have awaked you,
Had I not hoped that nature would o'erpower

At length the thoughts which shook your slumbers
thus.
An hour of rest will give you to your toils
With fitter thoughts and freshen'd strength.

DOGE.

I cannot—
I must not, if I could; for never was
Such reason to be watchful: yet a few—
Yet a few days and dream-perturbed nights,
And I shall slumber well—but where?—no matter.
Adieu, my Angiolina.

ANGIOLINA.

Let me be
An instant—yet an instant your companion,
I cannot bear to leave you thus.

DOGE.

Come then,
My gentle child—forgive me; thou wert made
For better fortunes than to share in mine,
Now darkling in their close toward the deep vale
Where death sits robed in his all-sweeping shadow.
When I am gone—it may be sooner than
Even these years warrant, for there is that stirring
Within—above—around, that in this city

Will make the cemeteries populous
As e'er they were by pestilence or war,—
When I *am* nothing, let that which I *was*
Be still, sometimes a name on thy sweet lips,
A shadow in thy fancy, of a thing
Which would not have thee mourn it, but remember;—
Let us begone, my child—the time is pressing.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

A retired Spot near the Arsenal.

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO *and* PHILIP CALENDARO.

CALENDARO.

How sped you, Israel, in your late complaint?

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

Why, well.

CALENDARO.

Is 't possible! will he be punish'd?

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

Yes.

CALENDARO.

With what? a mulct or an arrest!

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

With death!—

CALENDARO.

Now you rave, or must intend revenge,
Such as I counsell'd you, with your own hand.

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

Yes, and for one sole draught of hate, forego
The great redress we meditate for Venice,
And change a life of hope for one of exile;
Leaving one scorpion crush'd, and thousands stinging
My friends, my family, my countrymen!
No, Calendaro; these same drops of blood,
Shed shamefully, shall have the whole of his
For their requital——But not only his;
We will not strike for private wrongs alone:
Such are for selfish passions and rash men,
But are unworthy a tyrannicide.

CALENDARO.

You have more patience than I care to boast.
Had I been present when you bore this insult,
I must have slain him, or expired myself
In the vain effort to repress my wrath.

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

Thank Heaven, you were not—all had else been marr'd:
As 'tis, our cause looks prosperous still.

CALENDARO.

You saw
The Doge—what answer gave he?

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

That there was
No punishment for such as Barbaro.

CALENDARO.

I told you so before, and that 'twas idle
To think of justice from such hands.

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

At least,
It lull'd suspicion, showing confidence.
Had I been silent, not a Sbirro but
Had kept me in his eye, as meditating
A silent, solitary, deep revenge.

CALENDARO.

But wherefore not address you to the Council?
The Doge is a mere puppet, who can scarce
Obtain right for himself. Why speak to *him*?

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

You shall know that hereafter.

CALENDARO.

Why not now?

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

Be patient but till midnight. Get your musters,
And bid your friends prepare their companies:—
Set all in readiness to strike the blow,
Perhaps in a few hours; we have long waited
For a fit time—that hour is on the dial,
It may be of to-morrow's sun: delay
Beyond may breed us double danger. See
That all be punctual at our place of meeting,
And arm'd, excepting those of the Sixteen,
Who will remain among the troops to wait
The signal.

CALENDARO.

These brave words have breathed new life
Into my veins; I am sick of these protracted
And hesitating councils: day on day
Crawl'd on, and added but another link
To our long fetters, and some fresher wrong
Inflicted on our brethren or ourselves,
Helping to swell our tyrants' bloated strength.

Let us but deal upon them, and I care not
For the result, which must be death or freedom!
I'm weary to the heart of finding neither.

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

We will be free in life or death! the grave
Is chainless. Have you all the musters ready?
And are the sixteen companies completed
To sixty?

CALENDARO.

All save two, in which there are
Twenty-five wanting to make up the number.

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

No matter; we can do without. Whose are they?

CALENDARO.

Bertram's and old Soranzo's, both of whom
Appear less forward in the cause than we are.

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

Your fiery nature makes you deem all those
Who are not restless, cold: but there exists
Oft in concentred spirits, not less daring
Than in more loud avengers. Do not doubt them.

CALENDARO.

I do not doubt the elder; but in Bertram
There is a hesitating softness, fatal

To enterprise like ours: I've seen that man
Weep like an infant o'er the misery
Of others, heedless of his own, though greater;
And, in a recent quarrel, I beheld him
Turn sick at sight of blood, although a villain's.

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

The truly brave are soft of heart and eyes,
And feel for what their duty bids them do.
I have known Bertram long; there doth not breathe
A soul more full of honour.

CALENDARO.

It may be so:
I apprehend less treachery than weakness;
Yet, as he has no mistress, and no wife
To work upon his milkiness of spirit,
He may go through the ordeal; it is well
He is an orphan, friendless save in us:
A woman or a child had made him less
Than either in resolve.

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

Such ties are not
For those who are call'd to the high destinies
Which purify corrupted commonwealths;
We must forget all feelings save the *one*—

We must resign all passions save our purpose—
We must behold no object save our country—
And only look on death as beautiful,
So that the sacrifice ascend to heaven,
And draw down freedom on her evermore.

CALENDARO.

But, if we fail?——

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

They never fail who die
In a great cause: the block may soak their gore,
Their heads may sodden in the sun; their limbs
Be strung to city gates and castle walls—
But still their spirit walks abroad. Though years
Elapse, and others share as dark a doom,
They but augment the deep and sweeping thoughts
Which o'erpower all others, and conduct
The world at last to freedom: What were we,
If Brutus had not lived? He died in giving
Rome liberty, but left a deathless lesson—
A name which is a virtue, and a soul
Which multiplies itself throughout all time,
When wicked men wax mighty, and a state
Turns servile: he and his high friend were styled

"The last of Romans!" Let us be the first
Of true Venetians, sprung from Roman sires.

CALENDARO.

Our fathers did not fly from Attila
Into these isles, where palaces have sprung
On banks redeem'd from the rude ocean's ooze,
To own a thousand despots in his place.
Better bow down before the Hun, and call
A Tartar lord, than these swoln silkworms masters!
The first at least was man, and used his sword
As sceptre: these unmanly creeping things
Command our swords, and rule us with a word
As with a spell.

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

It shall be broken soon.
You say that all things are in readiness;
To-day I have not been the usual round,
And why thou knowest; but thy vigilance
Will better have supplied my care: these orders
In recent council to redouble now
Our efforts to repair the galleys, have
Lent a fair colour to the introduction
Of many of our cause into the arsenal,
As new artificers for their equipment,

Or fresh recruits obtain'd in haste to man
The hoped-for fleet.—Are all supplied with arms?

CALENDARO.

All who were deem'd trustworthy: there are some
Whom it were well to keep in ignorance
Till it be time to strike, and then supply them;
When in the heat and hurry of the hour
They have no opportunity to pause,
But needs must on with those who will surround
them.

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

You have said well.—Have you remark'd all such?

CALENDARO.

I've noted most; and caused the other chiefs
To use like caution in their companies.
As far as I have seen, we are enough
To make the enterprise secure, if 'tis
Commenced to-morrow; but, till 'tis begun,
Each hour is pregnant with a thousand perils

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

Let the sixteen meet at the wonted hour,
Except Soranzo, Nicoletto Blondo,
And Marco Giuda, who will keep their watch

Within the arsenal, and hold all ready,
Expectant of the signal we will fix on.

CALENDARO.

We will not fail.

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

Let all the rest be there;
I have a stranger to present to them.

CALENDARO.

A stranger! doth he know the secret?

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

Yes.

CALENDARO.

And have you dared to peril your friends' lives
On a rash confidence in one we know not?

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

I have risk'd no man's life except my own—
Of that be certain: he is one who may
Make our assurance doubly sure, according
His aid; and, if reluctant, he no less
Is in our power: he comes alone with me,
And cannot 'scape us; but he will not swerve.

CALENDARO.

I cannot judge of this until I know him:
Is he one of our order?

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

Ay, in spirit,
Although a child of greatness; he is one
Who would become a throne, or overthrow one—
One who has done great deeds, and seen great changes;
No tyrant, though bred up to tyranny;
Valiant in war, and sage in council; noble
In nature, although haughty; quick, yet wary:
Yet for all this, so full of certain passions,
That if once stirr'd and baffled, as he has been
Upon the tenderest points, there is no Fury
In Grecian story like to that which wrings
His vitals with her burning hands, till he
Grows capable of all things for revenge;
And add too, that his mind is liberal;
He sees and feels the people are oppress'd,
And shares their sufferings. Take him all in all,
We have need of such, and such have need of us.

CALENDARO.

And what part would you have him take with us?

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

It may be, that of chief.

CALENDARO

What! and resign
Your own command as leader?

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

Even so.
My object is to make your cause end well,
And not to push myself to power. Experience,
Some skill, and your own choice, had mark'd me out
To act in trust as your commander, till
Some worthier should appear: if I have found such
As you yourselves shall own more worthy, think you
That I would hesitate from selfishness,
And, covetous of brief authority,
Stake our deep interest on my single thoughts,
Rather than yield to one above me in
All leading qualities? No, Calendaro,
Know your friend better; but you all shall judge.—
Away! and let us meet at the fix'd hour.
Be vigilant, and all will yet go well.

CALENDARO.

Worthy Bertuccio, I have known you ever
Trusty and brave, with head and heart to plan

What I have still been prompt to execute.
For my own part, I seek no other chief;
What the rest will decide I know not, but
I am with you, as I have ever been,
In all our undertakings. Now farewell,
Until the hour of midnight sees us meet.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT III.

• SCENE I.

Scene, the Space between the Canal and the Church of San Giovanni e San Paolo. An equestrian Statue before it.—A Gondola lies in the Canal at some distance.

Enter the DOGE *alone, disguised.*

DOGE (*solus*).

I am before the hour, the hour whose voice,
Pealing into the arch of night, might strike
These palaces with ominous tottering,
And rock their marbles to the corner-stone,
Waking the sleepers from some hideous dream
Of indistinct but awful augury
Of that which will befal them. Yes, proud city!
Thou must be cleansed of the black blood which
makes thee
A lazar-house of tyranny: the task
Is forced upon me, I have sought it not;
And therefore was I punish'd, seeing this

Patrician pestilence spread on and on,
Until at length it smote me in my slumbers,
And I am tainted, and must wash away
The plague-spots in the healing wave. Tall fane!
Where sleep my fathers, whose dim statues shadow
The floor which doth divide us from the dead,
Where all the pregnant hearts of our bold blood,
Moulder'd into a mite of ashes, hold
In one shrunk heap what once made many heroes,
When what is now a handful shook the earth—
Fane of the tutelar saints who guard our house!
Vault where two Doges rest—my sires! who died
The one of toil, the other in the field,
With a long race of other lineal chiefs
And sages, whose great labours, wounds, and state
I have inherited,—let the graves gape,
Till all thine aisles be peopled with the dead,
And pour them from thy portals to gaze on me!
I call them up, and them and thee to witness
What it hath been which put me to this task—
Their pure high blood, their blazon-roll of glories,
Their mighty name dishonour'd all *in* me,
Not *by* me, but by the ungrateful nobles
We fought to make our equals, not our lords:—

And chiefly thou, Ordelafo the brave,
Who perish'd in the field, where I since conquer'd,
Battling at Zara, did the hecatombs
Of thine and Venice' foes, there offer'd up
By thy descendant, merit such acquittance?
Spirits! smile down upon me; for my cause
Is yours, in all life now can be of yours,—
Your fame, your name, all mingled up in mine,
And in the future fortunes of our race!
Let me but prosper, and I make this city
Free and immortal, and our house's name
Worthier of what you were, now and hereafter!

Enter ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

Who goes there?

DOGE.

A friend to Venice.

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

'Tis he.

Welcome, my lord,—you are before the time.

DOGE.

I am ready to proceed to your assembly.

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

Have with you.—I am proud and pleased to see
Such confident alacrity. Your doubts
Since our last meeting, then, are all dispell'd?

DOGE.

Not so—but I have set my little left
Of life upon this cast: the die was thrown
When I first listen'd to your treason—Start not!
That is the word; I cannot shape my tongue
To syllable black deeds into smooth names,
Though I be wrought on to commit them. When
I heard you tempt your sovereign, and forbore
To have you dragg'd to prison, I became
Your guiltiest accomplice: now you may,
If it so please you, do as much by me.

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

Strange words, my lord, and most unmerited;
I am no spy, and neither are we traitors.

DOGE.

We!—*We!*—no matter—you have earn'd the
right
To talk of *us*.—But to the point.—If this
Attempt succeeds, and Venice, render'd free
And flourishing, when we are in our graves,

Conducts her generations to our tombs,
And makes her children with their little hands
Strew flowers o'er her deliverers' ashes, then
The consequence will sanctify the deed,
And we shall be like the two Bruti in
The annals of hereafter; but if not,
If we should fail, employing bloody means
And secret plot, although to a good end,
Still we are traitors, honest Israel;—thou
No less than he who was thy sovereign
Six hours ago, and now thy brother rebel.

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

'Tis not the moment to consider thus,
Else I could answer.—Let us to the meeting,
Or we may be observed in lingering here.

DOGE.

We *are* observed, and have been.

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

We observed!
Let me discover—and this steel——

DOGE.

Put up;
Here are no human witnesses: look there—
What see you?

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

Only a tall warrior's statue
Bestriding a proud steed, in the dim light
Of the dull moon.

DOGE.

That warrior was the sire
Of my sire's fathers, and that statue was
Decreed to him by the twice rescued city:—
Think you that he looks down on us, or no?

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

My lord, these are mere phantasies, there are
No eyes in marble.

DOGE.

But there are in Death.
I tell thee, man, there is a spirit in
Such things that acts and sees, unseen, though felt,
And, if there be a spell to stir the dead,
'Tis in such deeds as we are now upon.
Deem'st thou the souls of such a race as mine
Can rest, when he, their last descendant chief,
Stands plotting on the brink of their pure graves
With stung plebeians?

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

It had been as well
To have ponder'd this before,—ere you embark'd
In our great enterprise.—Do you repent?

DOGE.

No—but I *feel*, and shall do to the last.
I cannot quench a glorious life at once,
Nor dwindle to the thing I now must be,
And take men's lives by stealth, without some pause:
Yet doubt me not; it is this very feeling,
And knowing *what* has wrung me to be thus,
Which is your best security. There's not
A roused mechanic in your busy plot
So wrong'd as I, so fallen, so loudly call'd
To his redress: the very means I am forced
By these fell tyrants to adopt is such,
That I abhor them doubly for the deeds
Which I must do to pay them back for theirs.

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

Let us away—hark!——the hour strikes.

DOGE.

On—On—
It is our knell, or that of Venice.—On.—

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

Say, rather, 'tis her freedom's rising peal
Of triumph——This way—we are near the place.
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

The House where the Conspirators meet.

DAGOLINO, DORO, BERTRAM, FEDELE TREVISANO, CALENDARO, ANTONIO DELLE BENDE, etc. etc.

CALENDARO (*entering*).

Are all here?

DAGOLINO.

All with you: except the three
On duty, and our leader Israel,
Who is expected momently.

CALENDARO.

Where's Bertram?

BERTRAM.

Here!

CALENDARO.

Have you not been able to complete
The number wanting in your company?

BERTRAM.

I had mark'd out some: but I have not dared
To trust them with the secret, till assured
That they were worthy faith.

CALENDARO.

There is no need
Of trusting to their faith: *who*, save ourselves
And our more chosen comrades, is aware
Fully of our intent? they think themselves[3]
Engaged in secret to the Signory,
To punish some more dissolute young nobles
Who have defied the law in their excesses;
But once drawn up, and their new swords well-
flesh'd
In the rank hearts of the more odious senators,
They will not hesitate to follow up
Their blow upon the others, when they see
The example of their chiefs; and I for one
Will set them such, that they for very shame
And safety will not pause till all have perish'd.

BERTRAM.

How say you? *all!*

CALENDARO.

Whom wouldst thou spare?

BERTRAM.

I spare!

I have no power to spare. I only question'd,
Thinking that even amongst these wicked men
There might be some, whose age and qualities
Might mark them out for pity.

CALENDARO.

Yes, such pity
As when the viper hath been cut to pieces,
The separate fragments quivering in the sun
In the last energy of venemous life,
Deserve and have. Why, I should think as soon
Of pitying some particular fang which made
One in the jaw of the swoln serpent, as
Of saving one of these: they form but links
Of one long chain—one mass, one breath, one body;
They eat, and drink, and live, and breed together,
Revel and lie, oppress, and kill in concert,—
So let them die as *one!*

DAGOLINO.

Should *one* survive,
He would be dangerous as the whole: it is not
Their number, be it tens or thousands, but

The spirit of this aristocracy
Which must be rooted out; and if there were
A single shoot of the old tree in life,
'Twould fasten in the soil and spring again
To gloomy verdure and to bitter fruit.
Bertram, we must be firm!

CALENDARO.

Look to it well,
Bertram, I have an eye upon thee.

BERTRAM.

Who
Distrusts me?

CALENDARO.

Not I; for if I did so,
Thou wouldst not now be there to talk of trust,
It is thy softness, not thy want of faith,
Which makes thee to be doubted.

BERTRAM.

You should know
Who hear me, who and what I am; a man
Roused like yourselves to overthrow oppression;
A kind man, I am apt to think, as some
Of you have found me; and if brave or no,
You, Calendaro, can pronounce, who have seen me

Put to the proof; or, if you should have doubts,
I'll clear them on your person!

CALENDARO.

You are welcome,
When once our enterprise is o'er, which must not
Be interrupted by a private brawl.

BERTRAM.

I am no brawler; but can bear myself
As far among the foe as any he
Who hears me; else why have I been selected
To be of your chief comrades? but no less
I own my natural weakness; I have not
Yet learn'd to think of indiscriminate murder
Without some sense of shuddering; and the sight
Of blood which spouts through hoary scalps is not
To me a thing of triumph, nor the death
Of men surprised a glory. Well——too well
I know that we must do such things on those
Whose acts have raised up such avengers; but
If there were some of these who could be saved
From out this sweeping fate, for our own sakes
And for our honour, to take off some stain
Of massacre, which else pollutes it wholly,

I had been glad; and see no cause in this
For sneer, nor for suspicion!

DAGOLINO.

Calm thee, Bertram;
For we suspect thee not, and take good heart.
It is the cause, and not our will, which asks
Such actions from our hands: we'll wash away
All stains in Freedom's fountain!

Enter ISRAEL BERTUCCIO *and the* DOGE, *disguised.*

DAGOLINO.

Welcome, Israel.

CONSPIRATORS.

Most welcome.—Brave Bertuccio, thou art late—
Who is this stranger?

CALENDARO.

It is time to name him.
Our comrades are even now prepared to greet him
In brotherhood, as I have made it known
That thou wouldst add a brother to our cause,
Approved by thee, and thus approved by all,
Such is our trust in all thine actions. Now
Let him unfold himself.

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

Stranger, step forth!

[*The* DOGE *discovers himself.*

CONSPIRATORS.

To arms!—we are betray'd—it is the Doge!
Down with them both! our traitorous captain, and
The tyrant he hath sold us to!

CALENDARO *(drawing his sword).*

Hold! Hold!
Who moves a step against them dies. Hold! hear
Bertuccio.—What! are you appall'd to see
A lone, unguarded, weaponless old man
Amongst you?—Israel, Speak! what means this
mystery?

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

Let them advance and strike at their own bosoms,
Ungrateful suicides! for on our lives
Depend their own, their fortunes, and their hopes.

DOGE.

Strike!—If I dreaded death, a death more fearful
Than any your rash weapons can inflict,
I should not now be here:—Oh, noble Courage!
The eldest born of Fear, which makes you brave
Against this solitary hoary head!

See the bold chiefs, who would reform a state
And shake down senates, mad with wrath and dread
At sight of one patrician.—Butcher me,
You can; I care not.—Israel, are these men
The mighty hearts you spoke of? look upon them!

CALENDARO.

Faith! he hath shamed us, and deservedly.
Was this your trust in your true chief Bertuccio,
To turn your swords against him and his guest?
Sheathe them, and hear him.

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

I disdain to speak.
They might and must have known a heart like mine
Incapable of treachery, and the power
They gave me to adopt all fitting means
To further their design was ne'er abused.
They might be certain that whoe'er was brought
By me into this council, had been led
To take his choice—as brother, or as victim.

DOGE.

And which am I to be? your actions leave
Some cause to doubt the freedom of the choice.

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

My lord, we would have perish'd here together,

Had these rash men proceeded; but, behold,
They are ashamed of that mad moment's impulse,
And droop their heads; believe me, they are such
As I describe them.—Speak to them.

CALENDARO.

Ay, speak;
We are all listening in wonder.

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO,

Addressing the Conspirators.

You are safe,
Nay, more, almost triumphant—listen then,
And know my words for truth.

DOGE.

You see me here,
As one of you hath said, an old, unarm'd,
Defenceless man; and yesterday you saw me
Presiding in the hall of ducal state,
Apparent sovereign of our hundred isles,
Robed in official purple, dealing out
The edicts of a power which is not mine,
Nor yours, but of our masters—the patricians.
Why I was there you know, or think you know;
Why I am *here*, he who hath been most wrong'd,
He who among you hath been most insulted,

Outraged and trodden on, until he doubt
If he be worm or no, may answer for me,
Asking of his own heart what brought him here?
You know my recent story, all men know it,
And judge of it far differently from those
Who sate in judgment to heap scorn on scorn.
But spare me the recital—it is here,
Here at my heart the outrage—but my words,
Already spent in unavailing plaints,
Would only show my feebleness the more,
And I come here to strengthen even the strong,
And urge them on to deeds, and not to war
With woman's weapons; but I need not urge you.
Our private wrongs have sprung from public vices
In this—I cannot call it commonwealth
Nor kingdom, which hath neither prince nor people,
But all the sins of the old Spartan state
Without its virtues—temperance and valour.
The lords of Lacedemon were true soldiers,
But ours are Sybarites, while we are Helots,
Of whom I am the lowest, most enslaved,
Although drest out to head a pageant, as
The Greeks of yore made drunk their slaves to form

A pastime for their children. You are met
To overthrow this monster of a state,
This mockery of a government, this spectre,
Which must be exorcised with blood, and then,
We will renew the times of truth and justice,
Condensing in a fair free commonwealth
Not rash equality, but equal rights,
Proportion'd like the columns to the temple,
Giving and taking strength reciprocal,
And making firm the whole with grace and beauty,
So that no part could be removed without
Infringement of the general symmetry.
In operating this great change, I claim
To be one of you—if you trust in me,
If not, strike home,—my life is compromised,
And I would rather fall by freemen's hands
Than live another day to act the tyrant
As delegate of tyrants; such I am not,
And never have been—read it in our annals;
I can appeal to my past government
In many lands and cities; they can tell you
If I were an oppressor, or a man
Feeling and thinking for my fellow men.
Haply had I been what the senate sought,

A thing of robes and trinkets, dizen'd out
To sit in state as for a sovereign's picture;
A popular scourge, a ready sentence-signer,
A stickler for the Senate and "the Forty,"
A sceptic of all measures which had not
The sanction of "The Ten," a council fawner,
A tool, a fool, a puppet,—they had ne'er
Foster'd the wretch who stung me. What I suffer
Has reach'd me through my pity for the people;
That many know, and they who know not yet
Will one day learn: meantime, I do devote.
Whate'er the issue, my last days of life—
My present power, such as it is, not that
Of Doge, but of a man who has been great
Before he was degraded to a Doge,
And still has individual means and mind.
I stake my fame (and I had fame)—my breath
(The least of all, for its last hours are nigh)—
My heart—my hope—my soul—upon this cast!
Such as I am, I offer me to you
And to your chiefs, accept me or reject me,
A Prince who fain would be a citizen
Or nothing, and who has left his throne to be so.

CALENDARO.

Long live Faliero!—Venice shall be free!

CONSPIRATORS.

Long live Faliero!

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

Comrades! did I well?
Is not this man a host in such a cause?

DOGE.

This is no time for eulogies, nor place
For exultation. Am I one of you?

CALENDARO.

Ay, and the first amongst us, as thou hast been
Of Venice—be our general and chief.

DOGE.

Chief!—General!—I was general at Zara,
And chief in Rhodes and Cyprus, prince in Venice,
I cannot stoop——that is, I am not fit
To lead a band of——patriots: when I lay
Aside the dignities which I have borne,
'Tis not to put on others, but to be
Mate to my fellows—but now to the point:
Israel has stated to me your whole plan—
'Tis bold, but feasible if I assist it,
And must be set in motion instantly.

CALENDARO.

E'en when thou wilt—is it not so, my friends?
I have disposed all for a sudden blow;
When shall it be then?

DOGE.

At sunrise.

BERTRAM.

So soon?

DOGE.

So soon?—so late—each hour accumulates
Peril on peril, and the more so now
Since I have mingled with you; know you not
The Council, and "The Ten?" the spies, the eyes
Of the patricians dubious of their slaves,
And now more dubious of the prince they have
made one?
I tell you you must strike, and suddenly,
Full to the Hydra's heart—its heads will follow.

CALENDARO.

With all my soul and sword I yield assent:
Our companies are ready, sixty each,
And all now under arms by Israel's order,
Each at their different place of rendezvous,
And vigilant, expectant of some blow;

Let each repair for action to his post!
And now, my lord, the signal?

DOGE.

When you hear
The great bell of Saint Mark's, which may not be
Struck without special order of the Doge
(The last poor privilege they leave their prince),
March on Saint Mark's!

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

And there?

DOGE.

By different routes
Let your march be directed, every sixty
Entering a separate avenue, and still
Upon the way let your cry be of war
And of the Genoese fleet, by the first dawn
Discern'd before the port; form round the palace,
Within whose court will be drawn out in arms
My nephew and the clients of our house,
Many and martial; while the bell tolls on,
Shout ye, "Saint Mark!—the foe is on our waters!"

CALENDARO.

I see it now— but on, my noble lord.

DOGE.

All the patricians flocking to the Council

(Which they dare not refuse, at the dread signal
Pealing from out their patron saint's proud tower),
Will then be gather'd in unto the harvest,
And we will reap them with the sword for sickle.
If some few should be tardy or absent them,
'Twill be but to be taken faint and single,
When the majority are put to rest.

CALENDARO.

Would that the hour were come! we will not scotch,
But kill.

BERTRAM.

Once more, sir, with your pardon, I
Would now repeat the question which I ask'd
Before Bertuccio added to our cause
This great ally who renders it more sure,
And therefore safer, and as such admits
Some dawn of mercy to a portion of
Our victims—must all perish in this slaughter?

CALENDARO.

All who encounter me and mine, be sure,
The mercy they have shown, I show.

CONSPIRATORS.

All! all!

Is this a time to talk of pity? when
Have they e'er shown, or felt, or feign'd it?

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

Bertram,
This false compassion is a folly, and
Injustice to thy comrades and thy cause!
Dost thou not see, that if we single out
Some for escape, they live but to avenge
The fallen? and how distinguish now the innocent
From out the guilty? all their acts are *one*—
A single emanation from one body,
Together knit for our oppression! 'Tis
Much that we let their children live; I doubt
If all of these even should be set apart:
The hunter may reserve some single cub
From out the tiger's litter, but who e'er
Would seek to save the spotted sire or dam,
Unless to perish by their fangs? However,
I will abide by Doge Faliero's counsel;
Let him decide if any should be saved

DOGE.

Ask me not—tempt me not with such a question—
Decide yourselves.

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

You know their private virtues
Far better than we can, to whom alone
Their public vices, and most foul oppression,
Have made them deadly; if there be amongst them
One who deserves to be repeal'd, pronounce.

DOGE.

Dolfino's father was my friend, and Lando
Fought by my side, and Marc Cornaro shared
My Genoese embassy; I saved the life
Of Veniero—shall I save it twice?
Would that I could save them and Venice also!
All these men, or their fathers, were my friends
Till they became my subjects; then fell from me
As faithless leaves drop from the o'erblown flower,
And left me a lone blighted thorny stalk,
Which, in its solitude, can shelter nothing,
So, as they let me wither, let them perish!

CALENDARO.

They cannot co-exist with Venice' freedom!

DOGE.

Ye, though you know and feel our mutual mass
Of many wrongs, even ye are ignorant
What fatal poison to the springs of life,

To human ties, and all that's good and dear,
Lurks in the present institutes of Venice.
All these men were my friends; I loved them, they
Requited honourably my regards;
We served and fought; we smiled and wept in
concert;
We revell'd or we sorrow'd side by side;
We made alliances of blood and marriage;
We grew in years and honours fairly, till
Their own desire, not my ambition, made
Them choose me for their prince, and then fare-
well!
Farewell all social memory! all thoughts
In common! and sweet bonds which link old
friendships,
When the survivors of long years and actions,
Which now belong to history, soothe the days
Which yet remain by treasuring each other,
And never meet, but each beholds the mirror
Of half a century on his brother's brow,
And sees a hundred beings, now in earth,
Flit round them whispering of the days gone by,
And seeming not all dead, as long as two
Of the brave, joyous, reckless, glorious band,

Which once were one and many, still retain
A breath to sigh for them, a tongue to speak
Of deeds that else were silent, save on marble——
Oime! Oime!—and must I do this deed?

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

My lord, you are much moved: it is not now
That such things must be dwelt upon.

DOGE.

Your patience
A moment—I recede not: mark with me
The gloomy vices of this government.
From the hour that made me Doge, the *Doge*
THEY *made* me—
Farewell the past! I died to all that had been,
Or rather they to me: no friends, no kindness,
No privacy of life—all were cut off:
They came not near me, such approach gave
umbrage;
They could not love me, such was not the law;
They thwarted me, 'twas the state's policy;
They baffled me, 'twas a patrician's duty;
They wrong'd me, for such was to right the state;
They could not right me, that would give suspicion,
So that I was a slave to my own subjects;

So that I was a foe to my own friends;
Begirt with spies for guards—with robes for power—
With pomp for freedom—gaolers for a council—
Inquisitors for friends—and hell for life!
I had one only fount of quiet left,
And *that* they poison'd! My pure household gods
Were shiver'd on my hearth, and o'er their shrine
Sate grinning ribaldry and sneering scorn.

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

You have been deeply wrong'd, and now shall be
Nobly avenged before another night.

DOGE.

I had borne all—it hurt me, but I bore it—
Till this last running over of the cup
Of bitterness—until this last loud insult,
Not only unredress'd, but sanction'd; then,
And thus, I cast all further feelings from me—
The feelings which they crush'd for me, long, long
Before, even in their oath of false allegiance!
Even in that very hour and vow, they abjured
Their friend and made a sovereign, as boys make
Playthings, to do their pleasure and be broken!

I from that hour have seen but senators
In dark suspicious conflict with the Doge,
Brooding with him in mutual hate and fear;
They dreading he should snatch the tyranny
From out their grasp, and he abhorring tyrants.
To me, then, these men have no *private* life,
Nor claim to ties they have cut off from others;
As senators for arbitrary acts
Amenable, I look on them—as such
Let them be dealt upon.

CALENDARO.

And now to action!
Hence, brethren, to our posts, and may this be
The last night of mere words: I'd fain be doing!
Saint Mark's great bell at dawn shall find me
wakeful!

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

Disperse then to your posts; be firm and vigilant;
Think on the wrongs we bear, the rights we claim.
This day and night shall be the last of peril!
Watch for the signal, and then march. I go
To join my band; let each be prompt to marshal
His separate charge: the Doge will now return

To the palace to prepare all for the blow.
We part to meet in freedom and in glory!

CALENDARO.

Doge, when I greet you next, my homage to you
Shall be the head of Steno on this sword!

DOGE.

No; let him be reserved unto the last,
Nor turn aside to strike at such a prey,
Till nobler game is quarried: his offence
Was a mere ebullition of the vice,
The general corruption generated
By the foul aristocracy; he could not—
He dared not in more honourable days
Have risk'd it! I have merged all private wrath
Against him, in the thought of our great purpose.
A slave insults me—I require his punishment
From his proud master's hands; if he refuse it,
The offence grows his, and let him answer it.

CALENDARO.

Yet, as the immediate cause of the alliance
Which consecrates our undertaking more,
I owe him such deep gratitude, that fain
I would repay him as he merits; may I?

DOGE.

You would but lop the hand, and I the head;
You would but smite the scholar, I the master,
You would but punish Steno, I the senate.
I cannot pause on individual hate,
In the absorbing, sweeping, whole revenge,
Which, like the sheeted fire from heaven, must
blast
Without distinction, as it fell of yore,
Where the Dead Sea hath quench'd two cities'
ashes.

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

Away, then, to your posts! I but remain
A moment to accompany the Doge
To our late place of trust, to see no spies
Have been upon the scout, and thence I hasten
To where my allotted band is under arms.

CALENDARO.

Farewell, then, until dawn.

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

Success go with you!

CONSPIRATORS.

We will not fail—away! My lord, farewell!

[*The Conspirators salute the* Doge *and* Israel Bertuccio, *and retire, headed by* Philip Calendaro. *The* Doge *and* Israel Bertuccio *remain.*

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

We have them in the toil—it cannot fail!
Now thou 'rt indeed a sovereign, and wilt make
A name immortal greater than the greatest:
Free citizens have struck at kings ere now;
Cæsars have fallen, and even patrician hands
Have crush'd dictators, as the popular steel
Has reach'd patricians; but until this hour,
What prince has plotted for his people's freedom?
Or risk'd a life to liberate his subjects?
For ever, and for ever, they conspire
Against the people, to abuse their hands
To chains, but laid aside to carry weapons
Against the fellow nations, so that yoke
On yoke, and slavery and death may whet,
Not glut, the never-gorged Leviathan!
Now, my lord, to our enterprise; 'tis great,
And greater the reward; why stand you rapt?
A moment back, and you were all impatience!

DOGE.

And is it then decided? must they die?

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

Who?

DOGE.

My own friends by blood and courtesy,
And many deeds and days—the senators?

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

You passed their sentence, and it is a just one.

DOGE.

Ay, so it seems, and so it is to *you;*
You are a patriot, a plebeian Gracchus—
The rebel's oracle—the people's tribune—
I blame you not, you act in your vocation;
They smote you, and oppress'd you, and despised
you;
So they have *me:* but *you* ne'er spake with them;
You never broke their bread, nor shared their salt;
You never had their wine-cup at your lips;
You grew not up with them, nor laugh'd, nor wept,
Nor held a revel in their company;
Ne'er smiled to see them smile, nor claim'd their
smile
In social interchange for yours, nor trusted

Nor wore them in your heart of hearts, as I have :
These hairs of mine are gray, and so are theirs,
The elders of the council ; I remember
When all our locks were like the raven's wing,
As we went forth to take our prey around
The isles wrung from the false Mahometan :
And can I see them dabbled o'er with blood?
Each stab to them will seem my suicide.

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

Doge! Doge! this vacillation is unworthy
A child; if you are not in second childhood,
Call back your nerves to your own purpose, nor
Thus shame yourself and me. By heavens! I'd
rather
Forego even now, or fail in our intent,
Than see the man I venerate subside
From high resolves into such shallow weakness!
You have seen blood in battle, shed it, both
Your own and that of others ; can you shrink then
From a few drops from veins of hoary vampires,
Who but give back what they have drain'd from
millions?

DOGE.

Bear with me! Step by step, and blow on blow,

I will divide with you; think not I waver:
Ah! no; it is the *certainty* of all
Which I must do doth make me tremble thus.
But let these last and lingering thoughts have way,
To which you only and the night are conscious,
And both regardless; when the hour arrives,
'Tis mine to sound the knell, and strike the blow,
Which shall unpeople many palaces,
And hew the highest genealogic trees
Down to the earth, strew'd with their bleeding
fruit,
And crush their blossoms into barrenness;
This will I—must I—have I sworn to do,
Nor aught can turn me from my destiny;
But still I quiver to behold what I
Must be, and think what I have been! Bear with
me.

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

Re-man your breast; I feel no such remorse,
I understand it not: why should you change?
You acted, and you act on your free will.

DOGE.

Ay, there it is—*you* feel not, nor do I,
Else I should stab thee on the spot, to save

A thousand lives, and, killing, do no murder;
You *feel* not—*you* go to this butcher-work
As if these high-born men were steers for shambles!
When all is over, you'll be free and merry,
And calmly wash those hands incarnadine;
But I, outgoing thee and all thy fellows
In this surpassing massacre, shall be,
Shall see, and feel—oh God! oh God! 'tis true,
And thou dost well to answer that it was
"My own free will and act;" and yet you err,
For I *will* do this! Doubt not—fear not; I
Will be your most unmerciful accomplice!
And yet I act no more on my free will,
Nor my own feelings—both compel me back;
But there is *hell* within me and around,
And like the demon who believes and trembles
Must I abhor and do. Away! away!
Get thee unto thy fellows, I will hie me
To gather the retainers of our house.
Doubt not, Saint Mark's great bell shall wake all
Venice,
Except her slaughter'd senate: ere the sun
Be broad upon the Adriatic, there
Shall be a voice of weeping, which shall drown

The roar of waters in the cry of blood!
I am resolved—come on.

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

With all my soul!
Keep a firm rein upon these bursts of passion;
Remember what these men have dealt to thee,
And that this sacrifice will be succeeded
By ages of prosperity and freedom
To this unshackled city: a true tyrant
Would have depopulated empires, nor
Have felt the strange compunction which hath wrung you
To punish a few traitors to the people!
Trust me, such were a pity more misplaced
Than the late mercy of the state to Steno.

DOGE.

Man, thou hast struck upon the chord which jars
All nature from my heart. Hence to our task!

[*Exeunt.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

Palazzo of the Patrician Lioni. Lioni *laying aside the mask and cloak which the Venetian Nobles wore in public, attended by a Domestic.*

LIONI.

I will to rest, right weary of this revel,
The gayest we have held for many moons,
And yet, I know not why, it cheer'd me not;
There came a heaviness across my heart,
Which in the lightest movement of the dance,
Though eye to eye, and hand in hand united
Even with the lady of my love, oppress'd me,
And through my spirit chill'd my blood, until
A damp like death rose o'er my brow; I strove
To laugh the thought away, but 't would not be;
Through all the music ringing in my ears
A knell was sounding as distinct and clear,
Though low and far, as e'er the Adrian wave
Rose o'er the city's murmur in the night,

Dashing against the outward Lido's bulwark;
So that I left the festival before
It reach'd its zenith, and will woo my pillow
For thoughts more tranquil, or forgetfulness.
Antonio, take my mask and cloak, and light
The lamp within my chamber.

ANTONIO.

Yes, my lord:
Command you no refreshment?

LIONI.

Nought, save sleep,
Which will not be commanded. Let me hope it,
[*Exit* ANTONIO.
Though my breast feels too anxious; I will try
Whether the air will calm my spirits: 'tis
A goodly night; the cloudy wind which blew
From the Levant hath crept into its cave,
And the broad moon has brighten'd. What a stillness! [*Goes to an open lattice.*
And what a contrast with the scene I left,
Where the tall torches' glare, and silver lamps'
More pallid gleam along the tapestried walls,
Spread over the reluctant gloom which haunts
Those vast and dimly-latticed galleries

A dazzling mass of artificial light,
Which show'd all things, but nothing as they were.
There Age essaying to recal the past,
After long striving for the hues of youth
At the sad labour of the toilet, and
Full many a glance at the too faithful mirror,
Prankt forth in all the pride of ornament,
Forgot itself, and trusting to the falsehood
Of the indulgent beams, which show, yet hide,
Believed itself forgotten, and was fool'd
There Youth, which needed not, nor thought of
such
Vain adjuncts, lavish'd its true bloom, and health,
And bridal beauty, in the unwholesome press
Of flush'd and crowded wassailers, and wasted
Its hours of rest in dreaming this was pleasure,
And so shall waste them till the sunrise streams
On sallow cheeks and sunken eyes, which should
not
Have worn this aspect yet for many a year.
The music, and the banquet, and the wine—
The garlands, the rose odours, and the flowers—
The sparkling eyes and flashing ornaments—
The white arms and the raven hair—the braids

And bracelets ; swanlike bosoms, and the necklace,
An India in itself, yet dazzling not
The eye like what it circled ; the thin robes
Floating like light clouds 'twixt our gaze and heaven ;
The many-twinkling feet so small and sylphlike,
Suggesting the more secret symmetry
Of the fair forms which terminate so well—
All the delusion of the dizzy scene,
Its false and true enchantments—art and nature,
Which swam before my giddy eyes, that drank
The sight of beauty as the parch'd pilgrim's
On Arab sands the false mirage, which offers
A lucid lake to his eluded thirst,
Are gone.—Around me are the stars and waters—
Worlds mirror'd in the ocean, goodlier sight
Than torches glared back by a gaudy glass ;
And the great element, which is to space
What ocean is to earth, spreads its blue depths,
Soften'd with the first breathings of the spring ;
The high moon sails upon her beauteous way,
Serenely smoothing o'er the lofty walls
Of those tall piles and sea-girt palaces,
Whose porphyry pillars, and whose costly fronts,

Fraught with the orient spoil of many marbles,
Like altars ranged along the broad canal,
Seem each a trophy of some mighty deed
Rear'd up from out the waters, scarce less strangely
Than those more massy and mysterious giants
Of architecture, those Titanian fabrics,
Which point in Egypt's plains to times that have
No other record. All is gentle: nought
Stirs rudely; but, congenial with the night,
Whatever walks is gliding like a spirit.
The tinklings of some vigilant guitars
Of sleepless lovers to a wakeful mistress,
And cautious opening of the casement, showing
That he is not unheard; while her young hand,
Fair as the moonlight of which it seems part,
So delicately white, it trembles in
The act of opening the forbidden lattice,
To let in love through music, makes his heart
Thrill like his lyre-strings at the sight;—the dash
Phosphoric of the oar, or rapid twinkle
Of the far lights of skimming gondolas,
And the responsive voices of the choir
Of boatmen answering back with verse for verse;
Some dusky shadow chequering the Rialto;

Some glimmering palace roof, or tapering spire,
Are all the sights and sounds which here pervade
The ocean-born and earth-commanding city;
How sweet and soothing is this hour of calm!
I thank thee, night! for thou hast chased away
Those horrid bodements which, amidst the throng,
I could not dissipate: and with the blessing
Of thy benign and quiet influence,
Now will I to my couch, although to rest
Is almost wronging such a night as this——

[*A knocking is heard from without.*

Hark! what is that? or who at such a moment?

Enter ANTONIO.

ANTONIO.

My lord, a man without, on urgent business,
Implores to be admitted.

LIONI.

Is he a stranger?

ANTONIO.

His face is muffled in his cloak, but both
His voice and gestures seem familiar to me;
I craved his name, but this he seem'd reluctant
To trust, save to yourself; most earnestly
He sues to be permitted to approach you

LIONI.

'Tis a strange hour, and a suspicious bearing!
And yet there is slight peril: 'tis not in
Their houses noble men are struck at; still,
Although I know not that I have a foe
In Venice, 'twill be wise to use some caution.
Admit him, and retire; but call up quickly
Some of thy fellows, who may wait without.—
Who can this man be?

Exit ANTONIO, *and returns with* BERTRAM *muffled.*

BERTRAM.

My good lord Lioni,
I have no time to lose, nor thou—dismiss
This menial hence, I would be private with you.

LIONI.

It seems the voice of Bertram—go, Antonio.

Exit ANTONIO.

Now, stranger, what would you at such an hour?

BERTRAM (*discovering himself*).

A boon, my noble patron; you have granted
Many to your poor client, Bertram; add
This one, and make him happy.

LIONI.

Thou hast known me

From boyhood, ever ready to assist thee
In all fair objects of advancement, which
Beseem one of thy station ; I would promise
Ere thy request was heard, but that the hour,
Thy bearing, and this strange and hurried mode
Of suing, gives me to suspect this visit
Hath some mysterious import—but say on—
What has occurred, some rash and sudden broil?—
A cup too much, a scuffle, and a stab?—
Mere things of every day ; so that thou hast not
Spilt noble blood, I guarantee thy safety;
But then thou must withdraw, for angry friends
And relatives, in the first burst of vengeance,
Are things in Venice deadlier than the laws.

BERTRAM.

My lord, I thank you ; but——

LIONI.

But what? You have not
Raised a rash hand against one of our order?
If so, withdraw and fly, and own it not ;
I would not slay—but then I must not save thee!
He who has shed patrician blood——

BERTRAM.

I come

To save patrician blood, and not to shed it!
And thereunto I must be speedy, for
Each minute lost may lose a life: since Time
Has changed his slow scythe for the two-edged
sword,
And is about to take, instead of sand,
The dust from sepulchres to fill his hour-glass!—
Go not *thou* forth to-morrow!

LIONI.

Wherefore not?—
What means this menace?

BERTRAM.

Do not seek its meaning,
But do as I implore thee;—stir not forth,
Whate'er be stirring; though the roar of crowds—
The cry of women, and the shrieks of babes—
The groans of men—the clash of arms—the sound
Of rolling drum, shrill trump, and hollow bell,
Peal in one wide alarum!—Go not forth
Until the tocsin's silent, nor even then
Till I return!

LIONI.

Again, what does this mean?

BERTRAM.

Again, I tell thee, ask not; but by all
Thou holdest dear on earth or heaven—by all
The souls of thy great fathers, and thy hope
To emulate them, and to leave behind
Descendants worthy both of them and thee—
By all thou hast of blest in hope or memory—
By all thou hast to fear here or hereafter—
By all the good deeds thou hast done to me,
Good I would now repay with greater good,
Remain within—trust to thy household gods
And to my word for safety, if thou dost
As I now counsel—but if not, thou art lost!

LIONI.

I am indeed already lost in wonder;
Surely thou ravest! what have *I* to dread?
Who are my foes? or if there be such, *why*
Art *thou* leagued with them?—*thou!* or if so leagued,
Why comest thou to tell me at this hour.
And not before?

BERTRAM.

I cannot answer this.
Wilt thou go forth despite of this true warning?

LIONI.

I was not born to shrink from idle threats,
The cause of which I know not: at the hour
Of council, be it soon or late, I shall not
Be found among the absent.

BERTRAM.

Say not so!
Once more, art thou determined to go forth?

LIONI.

I am; nor is there aught which shall impede me!

BERTRAM.

Then Heaven have mercy on thy soul!—Farewell!
[*Going.*

LIONI.

Stay—there is more in this than my own safety
Which makes me call thee back; we must not part thus:
Bertram, I have known thee long.

BERTRAM.

From childhood, signor,
You have been my protector: in the days
Of reckless infancy, when rank forgets,
Or, rather, is not yet taught to remember
Its cold prerogative, we play'd together;

Our sports, our smiles, our tears, were mingled
oft;
My father was your father's client, I
His son's scarce less than foster-brother; years
Saw us together—happy, heart-full hours!—
Oh God! the difference 'twixt those hours and this!

LIONI.

Bertram, 'tis thou who hast forgotten them.

BERTRAM.

Nor now, nor ever; whatsoe'er betide,
I would have saved you: when to manhood's
growth
We sprung, and you, devoted to the state,
As suits your station, the more humble Bertram
Was left unto the labours of the humble,
Still you forsook me not; and if my fortunes
Have not been towering, 'twas no fault of him
Who oft-times rescued and supported me
When struggling with the tides of circumstance
Which bear away the weaker: noble blood
Ne'er mantled in a nobler heart than thine
Has proved to me, the poor plebeian Bertram.
Would that thy fellow senators were like thee!

LIONI.

Why, what hast thou to say against the senate?

BERTRAM.

Nothing.

LIONI.

I know that there are angry spirits
And turbulent mutterers of stifled treason
Who lurk in narrow places, and walk out
Muffled to whisper curses to the night;
Disbanded soldiers, discontented ruffians,
And desperate libertines who brawl in taverns.
Thou herdest not with such: 'tis true, of late
I have lost sight of thee, but thou wert wont
To lead a temperate life, and break thy bread
With honest mates, and bear a cheerful aspect.
What hath come to thee? in thy hollow eye
And hueless cheek, and thine unquiet motions,
Sorrow and shame and conscience seem at war
To waste thee.

BERTRAM.

Rather shame and sorrow light
On the accursed tyranny which rides
The very air in Venice, and makes men

Madden as in the last hours of the plague
Which sweeps the soul deliriously from life!

LIONI.

Some villains have been tampering with thee,
Bertram;
This is not thy old language, nor own thoughts;
Some wretch has made thee drunk with disaffection;
But thou must not be lost so; thou *wert* good
And kind, and art not fit for such base acts
As vice and villany would put thee to:
Confess—confide in me—thou know'st my nature—
What is it thou and thine are bound to do,
Which should prevent thy friend, the only son
Of him who was a friend unto thy father,
So that our good-will is a heritage
We should bequeath to our posterity
Such as ourselves received it, or augmented;
I say, what is it thou must do, that I
Should deem thee dangerous, and keep the house
Like a sick girl?

BERTRAM.

Nay, question me no further:
I must be gone.——

LIONI.

And I be murder'd!—say,
Was it not thus thou said'st, my gentle Bertram?

BERTRAM.

Who talks of murder? what said I of murder?—
'Tis false! I did not utter such a word.

LIONI.

Thou didst not; but from out thy wolfish eye,
So changed from what I knew it, there glares forth
The gladiator. If *my* life's thine object,
Take it—I am unarm'd,—and then away!
I would not hold my breath on such a tenure
As the capricious mercy of such things
As thou and those who have set thee to thy task-
work.

BERTRAM.

Sooner than spill thy blood, I peril mine;
Sooner than harm a hair of thine, I place
In jeopardy a thousand heads, and some
As noble, nay, even nobler than thine own.

LIONI.

Ay, is it even so? Excuse me, Bertram;
I am not worthy to be singled out

From such exalted hecatombs—who are they
That *are* in danger, and that *make* the danger?

BERTRAM.

Venice, and all that she inherits, are
Divided like a house against itself,
And so will perish ere to-morrow's twilight!

LIONI.

More mysteries, and awful ones! But now,
Or thou, or I, or both it may be, are
Upon the verge of ruin; speak once out,
And thou art safe and glorious; for 'tis more
Glorious to save than slay, and slay i' the dark
too—
Fie, Bertram! that was not a craft for thee!
How would it look to see upon a spear
The head of him whose heart was open to thee,
Borne by thy hand before the shuddering people?
And such may be my doom; for here I swear,
Whate'er the peril or the penalty
Of thy denunciation, I go forth,
Unless thou dost detail the cause, and show
The consequence of all which led thee here!

BERTRAM.

Is there no way to save thee? minutes fly,

And thou art lost!—*thou!* my sole benefactor,
The only being who was constant to me
Through every change. Yet, make me not a traitor!
Let me save thee—but spare my honour!

LIONI.

Where
Can lie the honour in a league of murder?
And who are traitors save unto the state?

BERTRAM.

A league is still a compact, and more binding
In honest hearts when words must stand for law;
And in my mind, there is no traitor like
He whose domestic treason plants the poniard
Within the breast which trusted to his truth.

LIONI.

And *who* will strike the steel to mine?

BERTRAM.

Not I;
I could have wound my soul up to all things
Save this. *Thou* must not die! and think how dear
Thy life is, when I risk so many lives,

Nay, more, the life of lives, the liberty
Of future generations, *not* to be
The assassin thou miscall'st me;—once, once more
I do adjure thee, pass not o'er thy threshold!

LIONI.

It is in vain—this moment I go forth.

BERTRAM.

Then perish Venice rather than my friend!
I will disclose—ensnare—betray—destroy—
Oh, what a villain I become for thee!

LIONI.

Say, rather thy friend's saviour and the state's!—
Speak—pause not—all rewards, all pledges for
Thy safety and thy welfare; wealth such as
The state accords her worthiest servants; nay,
Nobility itself I guarantee thee,
So that thou art sincere and penitent.

BERTRAM.

I have thought again: it must not be—I love thee—
Thou knowest it—that I stand here is the proof,
Not least though last; but having done my duty
By thee, I now must do it by my country!
Farewell!—we meet no more in life!—farewell!

LIONI.

What, ho! Antonio—Pedro—to the door!
See that none pass—arrest this man!——

Enter ANTONIO *and other armed Domestics, who seize* BERTRAM.

LIONI (*continues*).

Take care
He hath no harm; bring me my sword and cloak,
And man the gondola with four oars—quick—

Exit ANTONIO.

We will unto Giovanni Gradenigo's,
And send for Marc Cornaro:—fear not, Bertram;
This needful violence is for thy safety,
No less than for the general weal.

BERTRAM.

Where wouldst thou
Bear me a prisoner?

LIONI.

Firstly, to "The Ten;"
Next to the Doge.

BERTRAM.

To the Doge?

LIONI.

Assuredly;

Is he not chief of the state?

BERTRAM.

Perhaps at sunrise—

LIONI.

What mean you?—but we'll know anon.

BERTRAM.

Art sure?

LIONI.

Sure as all gentle means can make; and if
They fail, you know "The Ten" and their tribunal,
And that Saint Mark's has dungeons, and the dungeons
A rack.

BERTRAM.

Apply to it before the dawn
Now hastening into heaven.—One more such word,
And you shall perish piecemeal, by the death
Ye think to doom to me.

Re-enter Antonio.

ANTONIO.

The bark is ready,
My lord, and all prepared.

LIONI.

Look to the prisoner.
Bertram, I'll reason with thee as we go
To the Magnifico's, sage Gradenigo. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

The Ducal Palace—the Doge's Apartment.

The DOGE *and his nephew* BERTUCCIO FALIERO.

DOGE.

Are all the people of our house in muster?

BERTUCCIO FALIERO.

They are array'd, and eager for the signal,
Within our palace precincts at San Polo. [4]
I come for your last orders.

DOGE.

It had been
As well had there been time to have got together
From my own fief, Val di Marino, more
Of our retainers—but it is too late.

BERTUCCIO FALIERO.

Methinks, my lord, 'tis better as it is;
A sudden swelling of our retinue
Had waked suspicion; and, though fierce and trusty,
The vassals of that district are too rude
And quick in quarrel to have long maintain'd
The secret discipline we need for such
A service, till our foes are dealt upon.

DOGE.

True; but when once the signal has been given,
These are the men for such an enterprise:
These city slaves have all their private bias,
Their prejudice *against* or *for* this noble,
Which may induce them to o'erdo or spare
Where mercy may be madness; the fierce peasants,
Serfs of my county of Val di Marino,
Would do the bidding of their lord without
Distinguishing for love or hate his foes;
Alike to them Marcello or Cornaro,
A Gradenigo or a Foscari;
They are not used to start at those vain names,
Nor bow the knee before a civic senate:
A chief in armour is their Suzerain,
And not a thing in robes.

BERTUCCIO FALIERO.

We are enough;
And for the dispositions of our clients
Against the senate I will answer.

DOGE.

Well,
The die is thrown; but for a warlike service,
Done in the field, commend me to my peasants;
They made the sun shine through the host of Huns
When sallow burghers slunk back to their tents,
And cower'd to hear their own victorious trumpet
If there be small resistance, you will find
These citizens all lions, like their standard;
But if there's much to do, you'll wish with me
A band of iron rustics at our backs.

BERTUCCIO FALIERO.

Thus thinking, I must marvel you resolved
To strike the blow so suddenly.

DOGE.

Such blows
Must be struck suddenly or never. When
I had o'ermaster'd the weak false remorse
Which yearn'd about my heart, too fondly yield-
ing
A moment to the feelings of old days,

I was most fain to strike; and, firstly, that
I might not yield again to such emotions;
And, secondly, because of all these men,
Save Israel and Philip Calendaro,
I know not well the courage or the faith:
To-day might find 'mongst them a traitor to us,
As yesterday a thousand to the senate;
But once in, with their hilts hot in their hands,
They must *on* for their own sakes; one stroke struck,
And the mere instinct of the first-born Cain,
Which ever lurks somewhere in human hearts,
Though circumstance may keep it in abeyance,
Will urge the rest on like to wolves; the sight
Of blood to crowds begets the thirst of more,
As the first wine-cup leads to the long revel;
And you will find a harder task to quell
Than urge them when they *have* commenced; but *till*
That moment, a mere voice, a straw, a shadow,
Are capable of turning them aside.—
How goes the night?

BERTUCCIO FALIERO.

Almost upon the dawn.

DOGE.

Then it is time to strike upon the bell.
Are the men posted?

BERTUCCIO FALIERO.

By this time they are;
But they have orders not to strike, until
They have command from you through me in person.

DOGE.

'Tis well.—Will the morn never put to rest
These stars which twinkle yet o'er all the heavens?
I am settled and bound up, and being so,
The very effort which it cost me to
Resolve to cleanse this commonwealth with fire,
Now leaves my mind more steady. I have wept,
And trembled at the thought of this dread duty;
But now I have put down all idle passion,
And look the growing tempest in the face,
As doth the pilot of an admiral galley:
Yet (wouldst thou think it, kinsman?) it hath been
A greater struggle to me, than when nations
Beheld their fate merged in the approaching fight,
Where I was leader of a phalanx, where
Thousands were sure to perish—Yes, to spill

The rank polluted current from the veins
Of a few bloated despots needed more
To steel me to a purpose such as made
Timoleon immortal, than to face
The toils and dangers of a life of war.

BERTUCCIO FALIERO.

It gladdens me to see your former wisdom
Subdue the furies which so wrung you ere
You were decided.

DOGE.

It was ever thus
With me; the hour of agitation came
In the first glimmerings of a purpose, when
Passion had too much room to sway; but in
The hour of action I have stood as calm
As were the dead who lay around me: this
They knew who made me what I am, and trusted
To the subduing power which I preserved
Over my mood, when its first burst was spent
But they were not aware that there are things
Which make revenge a virtue by reflection,
And not an impulse of mere anger: though
The laws sleep, justice wakes, and injured souls
Oft do a public right with private wrong,

And justify their deeds unto themselves.—
Methinks the day breaks—is it not so? look,
Thine eyes are clear with youth;—the air puts on
A morning freshness, and, at least to me,
The sea looks grayer through the lattice.

BERTUCCIO FALIERO.

True,
The morn is dappling in the sky.

DOGE.

Away, then!
See that they strike without delay, and with
The first toll from St. Mark's, march on the palace
With all our house's strength; here I will meet
you—
The Sixteen and their companies will move
In separate columns at the self-same moment—
Be sure you post yourself by the great gate,
I would not trust "The Ten" except to us—
The rest, the rabble of patricians, may
Glut the more careless swords of those leagued
with us.
Remember that the cry is still "Saint Mark!
"The Genoese are come—ho! to the rescue!
"Saint Mark and liberty!"—Now—now to action!

BERTUCCIO FALIERO.

Farewell then, noble uncle! we will meet
In freedom and true sovereignty, or never!

DOGE.

Come hither, my Bertuccio—one embrace—
Speed, for the day grows broader—Send me soon
A messenger to tell me how all goes
When you rejoin our troops, and then sound—sound
The storm-bell from Saint Mark's!

[*Exit* BERTUCCIO FALIERO.

DOGE (*solus*).

He is gone,
And on each footstep moves a life.—'Tis done.
Now the destroying Angel hovers o'er
Venice, and pauses ere he pours the vial,
Even as the Eagle overlooks his prey,
And for a moment poised in middle air,
Suspends the motion of his mighty wings,
Then swoops with his unerring beak.—Thou day!
That slowly walk'st the waters! march—march on—
I would not smite i' the dark, but rather see
That no stroke errs. And you, ye blue sea-waves!

I have seen you dyed ere now, and deeply too,
With Genoese, Saracen, and Hunnish gore,
While that of Venice flow'd too, but victorious :
Now thou must wear an unmix'd crimson ; no
Barbaric blood can reconcile us now
Unto that horrible incarnadine,
But friend or foe will roll in civic slaughter.
And have I lived to fourscore years for this?
I, who was named preserver of the City ?
I, at whose name the million's caps were flung
Into the air, and cries from tens of thousands
Rose up, imploring Heaven to send me blessings,
And fame and length of days—to see this day ?
But this day black within the calendar,
Shall be succeeded by a bright millennium.
Doge Dandolo survived to ninety summers
To vanquish empires and refuse their crown ;
I will resign a crown, and make the state
Renew its freedom—but oh ! by what means ?
The noble end must justify them—What
Are a few drops of human blood ? 'tis false,
The blood of tyrants is not human ; they,
Like to incarnate Melochs; feed on ours,
Until 'tis time to give them to the tombs

Which they have made so populous.—Oh world!
Oh men! what are ye, and our best designs,
That we must work by crime to punish crime?
And slay as if Death had but this one gate,
When a few years would make the sword superfluous?
And I, upon the verge of th' unknown realm,
Yet send so many heralds on before me?—
I must not ponder this.

[*A pause.*

Hark! was there not
A murmur as of distant voices, and
The tramp of feet in martial unison?
What phantoms even of sound our wishes raise!
It cannot be—the signal hath not rung—
Why pauses it? My nephew's messenger
Should be upon his way to me, and he
Himself perhaps even now draws grating back
Upon its ponderous hinge the steep tower portal,
Where swings the sullen huge oracular bell,
Which never knells but for a princely death,
Or for a state in peril, pealing forth
Tremendous bodements; let it do its office,
And be this peal its awfulest and last.

Sound till the strong tower rock!—What, silent
still?
I would go forth, but that my post is here,
To be the centre of re-union to
The oft discordant elements which form
Leagues of this nature, and to keep compact
The wavering or the weak, in case of conflict,
For if they should do battle, 'twill be here,
Within the palace, that the strife will thicken;
Then here must be my station as becomes
The master mover.—Hark! he comes—he comes,
My nephew, brave Bertuccio's messenger.—
What tidings? Is he marching? Hath he sped?—
They here!—all's lost—yet will I make an effort

Enter a SIGNOR OF THE NIGHT,[5] *with Guards, etc.*

SIGNOR OF THE NIGHT.

Doge, I arrest thee of high treason!

DOGE.

Me!
Thy prince, of treason?—Who are they that dare
Cloak their own treason under such an order?

SIGNOR OF THE NIGHT (*showing his order*).

Behold my order from the assembled Ten.

DOGE.

And *where* are they, and *why* assembled? no
Such council can be lawful, till the prince
Preside there, and that duty's mine: on thine
I charge thee, give me way, or marshal me
To the council chamber.

SIGNOR OF THE NIGHT.

Duke, it may not be;
Nor are they in the wonted Hall of Council,
But sitting in the convent of Saint Saviour's.

DOGE.

You dare to disobey me then?

SIGNOR OF THE NIGHT.

I serve
The state, and needs must serve it faithfully;
My warrant is the will of those who rule it.

DOGE.

And till that warrant has my signature
It is illegal, and, as *now* applied,
Rebellious—Hast thou weigh'd well thy life's
worth,
That thus you dare assume a lawless function?

SIGNOR OF THE NIGHT.

'Tis not my office to reply, but act—

I am placed here as guard upon thy person,
And not as judge to hear or to decide.

DOGE (*aside*).

I must gain time—So that the storm-bell sound,
All may be well yet.—Kinsman, speed—speed—
speed!—
Our fate is trembling in the balance, and
Woe to the vanquish'd! be they prince and people,
Or slaves and senate—

[*The great Bell of Saint Mark's tolls*.

Lo! it sounds—it tolls!

DOGE (*aloud*).

Hark, Signor of the Night! and you, ye hirelings,
Who wield your mercenary staves in fear,
It is your knell—Swell on, thou lusty peal!
Now, knaves, what ransom for your lives?

SIGNOR OF THE NIGHT.

Confusion!
Stand to your arms, and guard the door—all's
lost
Unless that fearful bell be silenced soon.
The officer hath miss'd his path or purpose,
Or met some unforeseen and hideous obstacle.

Anselmo, with thy company proceed
Straight to the tower; the rest remain with me.
[Exit a part of the Guard.

DOGE.

Wretch! if thou wouldst have thy vile life, implore it;
It is not now a lease of sixty seconds.
Ay, send thy miserable ruffians forth;
They never shall return.

SIGNOR OF THE NIGHT.

So let it be!
They die then in their duty, as will I.

DOGE.

Fool! the high eagle flies at nobler game
Than thou and thy base myrmidons,—live on,
So thou provok'st not peril by resistance,
And learn (if souls so much obscured can bear
To gaze upon the sunbeams) to be free.

SIGNOR OF THE NIGHT.

And learn thou to be captive—It hath ceased,
[The bell ceases to toll.
The traitorous signal, which was to have set
The bloodhound mob on their patrician prey—
The knell hath rung, but it is not the senate's!

DOGE (*after a pause*).

All's silent, and all's lost!

SIGNOR OF THE NIGHT.

Now, Doge, denounce me
As rebel slave of a revolted council!
Have I not done my duty?

DOGE.

Peace, thou thing!
Thou hast done a worthy deed, and earn'd the
price
Of blood, and they who use thee will reward thee
But thou wert sent to watch, and not to prate,
As thou said'st even now—then do thine office,
But let it be in silence, as behoves thee,
Since, though thy prisoner, I am thy prince.

SIGNOR OF THE NIGHT.

I did not mean to fail in the respect
Due to your rank: in this I shall obey you.

DOGE (*aside*).

There now is nothing left me save to die;
And yet how near success! I would have fallen,
And proudly, in the hour of triumph, but
To miss it thus!

Enter other SIGNORS OF THE NIGHT *with* BERTUCCIO FALIERO *prisoner.*

SECOND SIGNOR.

We took him in the act
Of issuing from the tower, where, at his order,
As delegated from the Doge, the signal
Had thus begun to sound.

FIRST SIGNOR.

Are all the passes
Which lead up to the palace well secured?

SECOND SIGNOR.

They are—besides, it matters not; the chiefs
Are all in chains, and some even now on trial—
Their followers are dispersed, and many taken.

BERTUCCIO FALIERO.

Uncle!

DOGE.

It is in vain to war with Fortune;
The glory hath departed from our house.

BERTUCCIO FALIERO.

Who would have deem'd it?—Ah! one moment sooner!

DOGE.

That moment would have changed the face of ages;
This gives us to eternity—We'll meet it
As men whose triumph is not in success,
But who can make their own minds all in all,
Equal to every fortune. Droop not, 'tis
But a brief passage—I would go alone,
Yet if they send us, as 'tis like, together,
Let us go worthy of our sires and selves.

BERTUCCIO FALIERO.

I shall not shame you, uncle.

FIRST SIGNOR.

Lords, our orders
Are to keep guard on both in separate chambers,
Until the council call ye to your trial.

DOGE.

Our trial! will they keep their mockery up
Even to the last? but let them deal upon us,
As we had dealt on them, but with less pomp.
'Tis but a game of mutual homicides,
Who have cast lots for the first death, and they
Have won with false dice.—Who hath been our
Judas?

FIRST SIGNOR.

I am not warranted to answer that.

BERTUCCIO FALIERO.

I'll answer for thee—'tis a certain Bertram,
Even now deposing to the secret giunta.

DOGE.

Bertram, the Bergamask! With what vile tools
We operate to slay or save! This creature,
Black with a double treason, now will earn
Rewards and honours, and be stampt in story
With the geese in the Capitol, which gabbled
Till Rome awoke and had an annual triumph,
While Manlius, who hurl'd down the Gauls, was cast
From the Tarpeian.

FIRST SIGNOR.

He aspired to treason,
And sought to rule the state.

DOGE.

He saved the state,
And sought but to reform what he revived—
But this is idle——Come, sirs, do your work.

FIRST SIGNOR.

Noble Bertuccio, we must now remove you
Into an inner chamber.

BERTUCCIO FALIERO.

Farewell, uncle!
If we shall meet again in life I know not,
But they perhaps will let our ashes mingle.

DOGE.

Yes, and our spirits, which shall yet go forth,
And do what our frail clay, thus clogg'd, hath fail'd in!
They cannot quench the memory of those
Who would have hurl'd them from their guilty thrones,
And such examples will find heirs, though distant.

ACT V.

SCENE I.

The Hall of the Council of Ten assembled with the additional Senators, who, on the Trials of the Conspirators for the Treason of Marino Faliero, *composed what was called the Giunta. —Guards, Officers, etc. etc.*—Israel Bertuccio *and* Philip Calendaro *as Prisoners.*—Bertram, Lioni, *and Witnesses, etc.*

The Chief of the Ten, Benintende.

BENINTENDE.

There now rests, after such conviction of
Their manifold and manifest offences,
But to pronounce on these obdurate men
The sentence of the law: a grievous task
To those who hear, and these who speak. Alas!
That it should fall to me! And that my days
Of office should be stigmatised through all
The years of coming time, as bearing record
To this most foul and complicated treason

Against a just and free state, known to all
The earth as being the Christian bulwark 'gainst
The Saracen and the schismatic Greek,
The savage Hun, and not less barbarous Frank,
A city which has open'd India's wealth
To Europe; the last Roman refuge from
O'erwhelming Attila; the ocean's queen;
Proud Genoa's prouder rival! 'Tis to sap
The throne of such a city, these lost men
Have risk'd and forfeited their worthless lives—
So let them die the death.

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

We are prepared,
Your racks have done that for us. Let us die.

BENINTENDE.

If ye have that to say which would obtain
Abatement of your punishment, the Giunta
Will hear you; if you have aught to confess,
Now is your time, perhaps it may avail ye.

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

We stand to hear, and not to speak.

BENINTENDE.

Your crimes
Are fully proved by your accomplices,

And all which circumstance can add to aid them;
Yet we would hear from your own lips complete
Avowal of your treason: on the verge
Of that dread gulf which none repass, the truth
Alone can profit you on earth or heaven—
Say, then, what was your motive?

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

Justice!

BENINTENDE.

What
Your object?

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

Freedom!

BENINTENDE.

You are brief, sir.

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

So my life grows: I
Was bred a soldier, not a senator.

BENINTENDE.

Perhaps you think by this blunt brevity
To brave your judges to postpone the sentence?

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

Do you be brief as I am, and believe me,
I shall prefer that mercy to your pardon.

BENINTENDE.

Is this your sole reply to the tribunal?

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

Go, ask your racks what they have wrung from us,
Or place us there again, we have still some blood
left,
And some slight sense of pain in these wrench'd
limbs:
But this ye dare not do; for if we die there—
And you have left us little life to spend
Upon your engines, gorged with pangs already—
Ye lose the public spectacle with which
You would appal your slaves to further slavery!
Groans are not words, nor agony assent,
Nor affirmation truth, if nature's sense
Should overcome the soul into a lie,
For a short respite—Must we bear or die?

BENINTENDE.

Say, who were your accomplices?

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

The Senate!

BENINTENDE.

What do you mean?

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

Ask of the suffering people,
Whom your patrician crimes have driven to crime.

BENINTENDE.

You know the Doge?

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

I served with him at Zara
In the field, when *you* were pleading here your way
To present office; we exposed our lives,
While you but hazarded the lives of others,
Alike by accusation or defence;
And, for the rest, all Venice knows her Doge,
Through his great actions, and the senate's insults!

BENINTENDE.

You have held conference with him?

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

I am weary—
Even wearier of your questions than your tortures:
I pray you pass to judgment.

BENINTENDE.

It is coming.—
And you, too, Philip Calendaro, what
Have you to say why you should not be doom'd?

CALENDARO.

I never was a man of many words,
And now have few left worth the utterance.

BENINTENDE.

A further application of yon engine
May change your tone.

CALENDARO.

Most true, it *will* do so;
A former application did so; but
It will not change my words, or, if it did——

BENINTENDE.

What then?

CALENDARO.

Will my avowal on yon rack
Stand good in law?

BENINTENDE.

Assuredly.

CALENDARO.

Whoe'er
The culprit be whom I accuse of treason?

BENINTENDE.

Without doubt, he will be brought up to trial.

CALENDARO.

And on this testimony would he perish?

BENINTENDE.

So your confession be detail'd and full,
He will stand here in peril of his life.

CALENDARO.

Then look well to thy proud self, President!
For by the eternity which yawns before me,
I swear that *thou*, and only thou, shall be
The traitor I denounce upon that rack,
If I be stretch'd there for the second time.

ONE OF THE GIUNTA.

Lord President, 'twere best to proceed to judgment;
There is no more to be drawn from these men.

BENINTENDE.

Unhappy men! prepare for instant death.
The nature of your crime—our law—and peril
The state now stands in, leave not an hour's re-
spite—
Guards! lead them forth, and upon the balcony
Of the red columns, where, on festal Thursday, [6]
The Doge stands to behold the chase of bulls,
Let them be justified: and leave exposed
Their wavering relics, in the place of judgment,
To the full view of the assembled people!
And Heaven have mercy on their souls!

THE GIUNTA.

Amen!

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

Signors, farewell! we shall not all again
Meet in one place.

BENINTENDE.

And lest they should essay
To stir up the distracted multitude—
Guards! let their mouths be gagg'd,[7] even in the act
Of execution.—Lead them hence!

CALENDARO.

What! must we
Not even say farewell to some fond friend,
Nor leave a last word with our confessor?

BENINTENDE.

A priest is waiting in the ante-chamber;
But, for your friends, such interviews would be
Painful to them, and useless all to you.

CALENDARO.

I knew that we were gagg'd in life; at least,
All those who had not heart to risk their lives
Upon their open thoughts; but still I deem'd
That, in the last few moments, the same idle

Freedom of speech accorded to the dying,
Would not now be denied to us; but since——

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

Even let them have their way, brave Calendaro!
What matter a few syllables? let 's die
Without the slightest show of favour from them;
So shall our blood more readily arise
To heaven against them, and more testify
To their atrocities, than could a volume
Spoken or written of our dying words!
They tremble at our voices—nay, they dread
Our very silence—let them live in fear!—
Leave them unto their thoughts, and let us now
Address our own above!—Lead on; we are ready.

CALENDARO.

Israel, hadst thou but hearken'd unto me,
It had not now been thus; and yon pale villain,
The coward Bertram, would——

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

Peace, Calendaro!
What brooks it now to ponder upon this?

BERTRAM.

Alas! I fain you died in peace with me:
I did not seek this task; 'twas forced upon me:

Say, you forgive me, though I never can
Retrieve my own forgiveness—frown not thus!

ISRAEL BERTUCCIO.

I die and pardon thee!

CALENDARO (*spitting at him*).

I die and scorn thee!

[*Exeunt* ISRAEL BERTUCCIO *and* PHILIP CALENDARO, *Guards, etc.*

BENINTENDE.

Now that these criminals have been disposed of,
'Tis time that we proceed to pass our sentence
Upon the greatest traitor upon record
In any annals, the Doge Faliero!
The proofs and process are complete; the time
And crime require a quick procedure: shall
He now be called in to receive the award?

THE GIUNTI.

Ay, ay.

BENINTENDE.

Avogadori, order that the Doge
Be brought before the council.

ONE OF THE GIUNTI.

And the rest,
When shall they be brought up?

BENINTENDE.

When all the chiefs
Have been disposed of. Some have fled to Chiozza;
But there are thousands in pursuit of them,
And such precaution ta'en on terra firma,
As well as in the islands, that we hope
None will escape to utter in strange lands
His libellous tale of treasons 'gainst the senate.

Enter the DOGE *as Prisoner, with Guards, etc. etc.*

BENINTENDE.

Doge—for such still you are, and by the law
Must be consider'd, till the hour shall come
When you must doff the ducal bonnet from
That head, which could not wear a crown more noble
Than empires can confer, in quiet honour,
But it must plot to overthrow your peers,
Who made you what you are, and quench in blood
A city's glory—we have laid already
Before you in your chamber at full length,
By the Avogadori, all the proofs
Which have appear'd against you; and more ample
Ne'er rear'd their sanguinary shadows to

Confront a traitor. What have you to say
In your defence?

DOGE.

What shall I say to ye,
Since my defence must be your condemnation?
You are at once offenders and accusers,
Judges and executioners!—Proceed
Upon your power.

BENINTENDE.

Your chief accomplices
Having confess'd, there is no hope for you.

DOGE.

And who be they?

BENINTENDE.

In number many; but
The first now stands before you in the court,
Bertram, of Bergamo,—would you question him?

DOGE *(looking at him contemptuously)*.

No.

BENINTENDE.

And two others, Israel Bertuccio,
And Philip Calendaro, have admitted
Their fellowship in treason with the Doge!

DOGE.

And where are they?

BENINTENDE.

Gone to their place, and now
Answering to Heaven for what they did on earth.

DOGE.

Ah! the plebeian Brutus, is he gone?
And the quick Cassius of the arsenal?—
How did they meet their doom?

BENINTENDE.

Think of your own;
It is approaching. You decline to plead, then?

DOGE.

I cannot plead to my inferiors, nor
Can recognise your legal power to try me:
Show me the law!

BENINTENDE.

On great emergencies,
The law must be remodell'd or amended:
Our fathers had not fix'd the punishment
Of such a crime, as on the old Roman tables
The sentence against parricide was left
In pure forgetfulness; they could not render
That penal, which had neither name nor thought

In their great bosoms: who would have foreseen
That nature could be filed to such a crime
As sons 'gainst sires, and princes 'gainst their
realms?
Your sin hath made us make a law which will
Become a precedent 'gainst such haught traitors,
As would with treason mount to tyranny,
Not even contented with a sceptre, till
They can convert it to a two-edged sword!
Was not the place of Doge sufficient for ye?
What's nobler than the signory of Venice?

DOGE.

The signory of Venice! You betray'd me—
You—you, who sit there, traitors as ye are!
From my equality with you in birth,
And my superiority in action,
You drew me from my honourable toils
In distant lands—on flood—in field—in cities—
You singled me out like a victim to
Stand crown'd, but bound and helpless, at the altar
Where you alone could minister. I knew not—
I sought not—wish'd not—dream'd not the election,
Which reach'd me first at Rome, and I obey'd;

But found on my arrival, that besides
The jealous vigilance which always led you
To mock and mar your sovereign's best intents,
You had, even in the interregnum of
My journey to the capital, curtail'd
And mutilated the few privileges
Yet left the duke: all this I bore, and would
Have borne, until my very hearth was stain'd
By the pollution of your ribaldry,
And he, the ribald, whom I see amongst you—
Fit judge in such tribunal!——

BENINTENDE *(interrupting him).*

Michel Steno
Is here in virtue of his office, as
One of the Forty; "The Ten" having craved
A Giunta of patricians from the senate
To aid our judgment in a trial arduous
And novel as the present: he was set
Free from the penalty pronounced upon him,
Because the Doge, who should protect the law,
Seeking to abrogate all law, can claim
No punishment of others by the statutes
Which he himself denies and violates!

DOGE.

His PUNISHMENT! I rather see him *there*,
Where he now sits, to glut him with my death,
Than in the mockery of castigation,
Which your foul, outward, juggling show of justice
Decreed as sentence! Base as was his crime,
'Twas purity compared with your protection.

BENINTENDE.

And can it be, that the great Doge of Venice,
With three parts of a century of years
And honours on his head, could thus allow
His fury, like an angry boy's, to master
All feeling, wisdom, faith, and fear, on such
A provocation as a young man's petulance?

DOGE.

A spark creates the flame; 'tis the last drop
Which makes the cup run o'er, and mine was full
Already: you oppress'd the prince and people;
I would have freed both, and have fail'd in both:
The price of such success would have been glory,
Vengeance, and victory, and such a name
As would have made Venetian history
Rival to that of Greece and Syracuse
When they were freed, and flourish'd ages after,

And mine to Gelon and to Thrasybulus:—
Failing, I know the penalty of failure
Is present infamy and death—the future
Will judge, when Venice is no more, or free;
Till then, the truth is in abeyance. Pause not;
I would have shown no mercy, and I seek none;
My life was staked upon a mighty hazard,
And being lost, take what I would have taken!
I would have stood alone amidst your tombs;
Now you may flock round mine, and trample on it,
As you have done upon my heart while living.

BENINTENDE.

You do confess then, and admit the justice
Of our tribunal?

DOGE.

I confess to have fail'd:
Fortune is female; from my youth her favours
Were not withheld; the fault was mine to hope
Her former smiles again at this late hour.

BENINTENDE.

You do not then in aught arraign our equity?

DOGE.

Noble Venetians! stir me not with questions.
I am resign'd to the worst; but in me still

Have something of the blood of brighter days,
And am not over-patient. Pray you, spare me
Further interrogation, which boots nothing,
Except to turn a trial to debate.
I shall but answer that which will offend you,
And please your enemies—a host already:
'Tis true, these sullen walls should yield no echo;
But walls have ears—nay, more, they have tongues; and if
There were no other way for truth to o'erleap them,
You who condemn me, you who fear and slay me,
Yet could not bear in silence to your graves
What you would hear from me of good or evil;
The secret were too mighty for your souls:
Then let it sleep in mine unless you court
A danger which would double that you escape.
Such my defence would be, had I full scope
To make it famous; for true *words* are *things*,
And dying men's are things which long outlive,
And oftentimes avenge them; bury mine,
If ye would fain survive me: take this counsel,
And though too oft ye made me live in wrath,
Let me die calmly; you may grant me this;—

I deny nothing—defend nothing—nothing
I ask of you, but silence for myself,
And sentence from the court!

BENINTENDE.

This full admission
Spares us the harsh necessity of ordering
The torture to elicit the whole truth.

DOGE

The torture! you have put me there already,
Daily since I was Doge; but if you will
Add the corporeal rack, you may: these limbs
Will yield with age to crushing iron; but
There's that within my heart shall strain your
engines.

Enter an OFFICER.

OFFICER.

Noble Venctians! Duchess Faliero
Requests admission to the Giunta's presence.

BENINTENDE.

Say, conscript fathers [8] shall she be admitted?

ONE OF THE GIUNTA.

She may have revelatiohs of importance

Unto the state, to justify compliance
With her request.

BENINTENDE.

Is this the general will?

ALL.

It is

DOGE.

Oh, admirable laws of Venice!
Which would admit the wife, in the full hope
That she might testify against the husband.
What glory to the chaste Venetian dames!
But such blasphemers 'gainst all honour, as
Sit here, do well to act in their vocation.
Now, villain Steno! if this woman fail,
I'll pardon thee thy lie, and thy escape,
And my own violent death, and thy vile life.

The DUCHESS *enters*.

BENINTENDE.

Lady! this just tribunal has resolved,
Though the request be strange, to grant it, and
Whatever be its purport, to accord
A patient hearing with the due respect

Which fits your ancestry, your rank, and virtues:
But you turn pale—ho! there, look to the lady!
Place a chair instantly.

ANGIOLINA.

A moment's faintness—
'Tis past; I pray you pardon me, I sit not
In presence of my prince, and of my husband,
While he is on his feet.

BENINTENDE.

Your pleasure, lady?

ANGIOLINA.

Strange rumours, but most true, if all I hear
And see be sooth, have reach'd me, and I come
To know the worst, even at the worst; forgive
The abruptness of my entrance and my bearing.
Is it——I cannot speak—I cannot shape
The question—but you answer it ere spoken,
With eyes averted, and with gloomy brows—
Oh God! this is the silence of the grave!

BENINTENDE *(after a pause)*.

Spare us, and spare thyself the repetition
Of our most awful, but inexorable
Duty to heaven and man!

ANGIOLINA.

Yet speak; I cannot—
I cannot—no—even now believe these things.
Is *he* condemn'd?

BENINTENDE.

Alas!

ANGIOLINA.

And was he guilty?

BENINTENDE.

Lady! the natural distraction of
Thy thoughts at such a moment makes the question
Merit forgiveness; else a doubt like this
Against a just and paramount tribunal
Were deep offence. But question even the Doge,
And if he can deny the proofs, believe him
Guiltless as thy own bosom.

ANGIOLINA.

Is it so?
My lord—my sovereign—my poor father's friend—
The mighty in the field, the sage in council;
Unsay the words of this man!—Thou art silent!

BENINTENDE.

He hath already own'd to his own guilt,
Nor, as thou seest, doth he deny it now.

ANGIOLINA.

Ay, but he must not die! Spare his few years,
Which grief and shame will soon cut down to days!
One day of baffled crime must not efface
Near sixteen lustres crowded with brave acts.

BENINTENDE.

His doom must be fulfill'd without remission
Of time or penalty—'tis a decree.

ANGIOLINA.

He hath been guilty, but there may be mercy.

BENINTENDE.

Not in this case with justice.

ANGIOLINA.

Alas! signor,
He who is only just is cruel; who
Upon the earth would live were all judged justly?

BENINTENDE.

His punishment is safety to the state.

ANGIOLINA.

He was a subject, and hath served the state;
He was your general, and hath saved the state,
He is your sovereign, and hath ruled the state.

ONE OF THE COUNCIL.

He is a traitor, and betray'd the state.

ANGIOLINA.

And, but for him, there now had been no state
To save or to destroy; and you who sit
There to pronounce the death of your deliverer,
Had now been groaning at a Moslem oar,
Or digging in the Hunnish mines in fetters!

ONE OF THE COUNCIL.

No, lady, there are others who would die
Rather than breathe in slavery!

ANGIOLINA.

If there are so
Within *these* walls, *thou* art not of the number:
The truly brave are generous to the fallen!—
Is there no hope?

BENINTENDE.

Lady, it cannot be.

ANGIOLINA (*turning to the* DOGE).

Then die, Faliero! since it must be so;
But with the spirit of my father's friend.
Thou hast been guilty of a great offence,
Half-cancell'd by the harshness of these men.
I would have sued to them—have pray'd to them—
Have begg'd as famish'd mendicants for bread—
Have wept as they will cry unto their God

For mercy, and be answer'd as they answer—
Had it been fitting for thy name or mine,
And if the cruelty in their cold eyes
Had not announced the heartless wrath within.
Then, as a prince, address thee to thy doom!

DOGE.

I have lived too long not to know how to die!
Thy suing to these men were but the bleating
Of the lamb to the butcher, or the cry
Of seamen to the surge: I would not take
A life eternal, granted at the hands
Of wretches, from whose monstrous villanies
I sought to free the groaning nations!

MICHEL STENO.

Doge,
A word with thee, and with this noble lady,
Whom I have grievously offended. Would
Sorrow, or shame, or penance on my part,
Could cancel the inexorable past!
But since that cannot be, as Christians let us
Say farewell, and in peace: with full contrition
I crave, not pardon, but compassion from you,
And give, however weak, my prayers for both.

ANGIOLINA.

Sage Benintende, now chief judge of Venice,
I speak to thee in answer to yon signor.
Inform the ribald Steno, that his words
Ne'er weigh'd in mind with Loredano's daughter
Further than to create a moment's pity
For such as he is: would that others had
Despised him as I pity! I prefer
My honour to a thousand lives, could such
Be multiplied in mine, but would not have
A single life of others lost for that
Which nothing human can impugn—the sense
Of virtue, looking not to what is called
A good name for reward, but to itself.
To me the scorner's words were as the wind
Unto the rock: but as there are—alas!
Spirits more sensitive, on which such things
Light as the whirlwind on the waters; souls
To whom dishonour's shadow is a substance
More terrible than death here and hereafter;
Men whose vice is to start at vice's scoffing,
And who, though proof against all blandishments
Of pleasure, and all pangs of pain, are feeble
When the proud name on which they pinnacled

Their hopes is breathed on, jealous as the eagle
Of her high aiery; let what we now
Behold, and feel, and suffer, be a lesson
To wretches how they tamper in their spleen
With beings of a higher order. Insects
Have made the lion mad ere now; a shaft
I' the heel o'erthrew the bravest of the brave;
A wife's dishonour was the bane of Troy;
A wife's dishonour unking'd Rome for ever,
An injured husband brought the Gauls to Clusium,
And thence to Rome, which perish'd for a time,
An obscene gesture cost Caligula
His life, while Earth yet bore his cruelties,
A virgin's wrong made Spain a Moorish province;
And Steno's lie, couch'd in two worthless lines,
Hath decimated Venice, put in peril
A senate which hath stood eight hundred years,
Discrown'd a prince, cut off his crownless head,
And forged new fetters for a groaning people!
Let the poor wretch, like to the courtesan
Who fired Persepolis, be proud of this,
If it so please him—'twere a pride fit for him!
But let him not insult the last hours of
Him, who, whate'er he now is, *was* a hero,

By the intrusion of his very prayers;
Nothing of good can come from such a source,
Nor would we aught with him, nor now, nor ever:
We leave him to himself, that lowest depth
Of human baseness. Pardon is for men,
And not for reptiles—we have none for Steno,
And no resentment; things like him must sting,
And higher beings suffer; 'tis the charter
Of life. The man who dies by the adder's fang
May have the crawler crush'd, but feels no anger:
'Twas the worm's nature; and some men are
worms
In soul, more than the living things of tombs.

DOGE (to BENINTENDE).

Signor, complete that which you deem your duty.

BENINTENDE.

Before we can proceed upon that duty,
We would request the princess to withdraw;
'Twill move her too much to be witness to it.

ANGIOLINA.

I know it will, and yet I must endure it;
For 'tis a part of mine—I will not quit,
Except by force, my husband's side.—Proceed!
Nay, fear not either shriek, or sigh, or tear;

Though my heart burst, it shall be silent.—Speak!
I have that within which shall o'ermaster all.

BENINTENDE

Marino Faliero, Doge of Venice,
Count of Val di Marino, Senator,
And some time General of the Fleet and Army,
Noble Venetian, many times and oft
Entrusted by the state with high employments,
Even to the highest, listen to the sentence.
Convict by many witnesses and proofs,
And by thine own confession, of the guilt
Of treachery and treason, yet unheard of
Until this trial—the decree is death.
Thy goods are confiscate unto the state,
Thy name is razed from out her records, save
Upon a public day of thanksgiving
For this our most miraculous deliverance,
When thou art noted in our calendars
With earthquakes, pestilence, and foreign foes,
And the great enemy of man, as subject
Of grateful masses for Heaven's grace in snatching
Our lives and country from thy wickedness.
The place wherein as Doge thou shouldst be painted,
With thine illustrious predecessors, is

To be left vacant, with a death-black veil
Flung over these dim words engraved beneath,—
"This place is of Marino Faliero,
"Decapitated for his crimes."

DOGE.

What crimes?
Were it not better to record the facts,
So that the contemplator might approve,
Or at the least learn *whence* the crimes arose?
When the beholder knows a Doge conspired,
Let him be told the cause—it is your history.

BENINTENDE.

Time must reply to that; our sons will judge
Their fathers' judgment, which I now pronounce.
As Doge, clad in the ducal robes and cap,
Thou shalt be led hence to the Giant's Staircase,
Where thou and all our princes are invested;
And there, the ducal crown being first resumed
Upon the spot where it was first assumed,
Thy head shall be struck off; and Heaven have
mercy
Upon thy soul!

DOGE.

Is this the Giunta's sentence?

BENINTENDE.

It is.

DOGE.

I can endure it.—And the time?

BENINTENDE.

Must be immediate.—Make thy peace with God;
Within an hour thou must be in his presence.

DOGE.

I am already; and my blood will rise
To Heaven before the souls of those who shed it.—
Are all my lands confiscated?

BENINTENDE.

They are;
And goods, and jewels, and all kind of treasure,
Except two thousand ducats—these dispose of.

DOGE.

That's harsh—I would have fain reserved the lands
Near to Treviso, which I hold by investment
From Lawrence the Count-bishop of Ceneda,
In fief perpetual to myself and heirs,
To portion them (leaving my city spoil,
My palace and my treasures, to your forfeit)
Between my consort and my kinsmen.

BENINTENDE.

These
Lie under the state's ban; their chief, thy nephew,
In peril of his own life; but the council
Postpones his trial for the present. If
Thou will'st a state unto thy widow'd princess,
Fear not, for we will do her justice.

ANGIOLINA.

Signors,
I share not in your spoil! From henceforth, know
I am devoted unto God alone,
And take my refuge in the cloister.

DOGE.

Come!
The hour may be a hard one, but 'twill end.
Have I aught else to undergo save death?

BENINTENDE.

You have nought to do except confess and die.
The priest is robed, the scimitar is bare,
And both await without.—But, above all,
Think not to speak unto the people; they
Are now by thousands swarming at the gates,
But these are closed: the Ten, the Avogadori,
The Giunta, and the chief men of the Forty,

Alone will be beholders of thy doom,
And they are ready to attend the Doge.

DOGE.

The Doge!

BENINTENDE.

Yes, Doge, thou hast lived and thou shalt die
A sovereign; till the moment which precedes
The separation of that head and trunk,
That ducal crown and head shall be united.
Thou hast forgot thy dignity in deigning
To plot with petty traitors; not so we,
Who in the very punishment acknowledge
The prince. Thy vile accomplices have died
The dog's death, and the wolf's; but thou shalt fall
As falls the lion by the hunters, girt
By those who feel a proud compassion for thee,
And mourn even the inevitable death
Provoked by thy wild wrath, and regal fierceness.
Now we remit thee to thy preparation:
Let it be brief, and we ourselves will be
Thy guides unto the place where first we were
United to thee as thy subjects, and
Thy senate; and must now be parted from thee

As such for ever on the self-same spot.—
Guards! form the Doge's escort to his chamber.
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

The Doge's Apartment.

The Doge *as prisoner, and the* Duchess *attending him.*

DOGE.

Now that the priest is gone, 'twere useless all
To linger out the miserable minutes,
But one pang more, the pang of parting from thee,
And I will leave the few last grains of sand,
Which yet remain of the accorded hour,
Still falling—I have done with Time.

ANGIOLINA.

Alas!
And I have been the cause, the unconscious cause;
And for this funeral marriage, this black union,
Which thou, compliant with my father's wish,
Didst promise at *his* death, thou hast sealed thine own.

DOGE.

Not so: there was that in my spirit ever
Which shaped out for itself some great reverse;
The marvel is, it came not until now—
And yet it was foretold me.

ANGIOLINA.

How foretold you?

DOGE.

Long years ago—so long, they are a doubt
In memory, and yet they live in annals:
When I was in my youth, and served the senate
And signory as podesta and captain
Of the town of Treviso, on a day
Of festival, the sluggish bishop who
Convey'd the Host aroused my rash young anger,
By strange delay, and arrogant reply
To my reproof; I raised my hand and smote him,
Until he reel'd beneath his holy burthen;
And as he rose from earth again, he raised
His tremulous hands in pious wrath towards Heaven.
Thence pointing to the Host, which had fallen from him,
He turn'd to me, and said, "The hour will come

" When he thou hast o'erthrown shall overthrow
thee :
" The glory shall depart from out thy house,
" The wisdom shall be shaken from thy soul,
" And in thy best maturity of mind
" A madness of the heart shall seize upon thee ;
" Passion shall tear thee when all passions cease
" In other men, or mellow into virtues ;
" And majesty, which decks all other heads,
" Shall crown to leave thee headless ; honours
shall
" But prove to thee the heralds of destruction,
" And hoary hairs of shame, and both of death,
" But not such death as fits an aged man."
Thus saying, he pass'd on.—That hour is come.

ANGIOLINA.

And with this warning couldst thou not have striven
To avert the fatal moment, and atone
By penitence for that which thou hadst done?

DOGE.

I own the words went to my heart, so much
That I remember'd them amid the maze
Of life, as if they form'd a spectral voice,
Which shook me in a supernatural dream ;

And I repented; but 'twas not for me
To pull in resolution: what must be
I could not change, and would not fear. Nay, more,
Thou canst not have forgot what all remember,
That on my day of landing here as Doge,
On my return from Rome, a mist of such
Unwonted density went on before
The bucentaur like the columnar cloud
Which usher'd Israel out of Egypt, till
The pilot was misled, and disembark'd us
Between the pillars of Saint Mark's, where 'tis
The custom of the state to put to death
Its criminals, instead of touching at
The Riva della Paglia, as the wont is,—
So that all Venice shudder'd at the omen.

ANGIOLINA.

Ah! little boots it now to recollect
Such things.

DOGE.

And yet I find a comfort in
The thought that these things are the work of Fate;
For I would rather yield to gods than men,
Or cling to any creed of destiny,

Rather than deem these mortals, most of whom
I know to be as worthless as the dust,
And weak as worthless, more than instruments
Of an o'er-ruling power; they in themselves
Were all incapable—they could not be
Victors of him who oft had conquer'd for them!

ANGIOLINA.

Employ the minutes left in aspirations
Of a more healing nature, and in peace
Even with these wretches take thy flight to Heaven.

DOGE.

I *am* at peace: the peace of certainty
That a sure hour will come, when their sons' sons,
And this proud city, and these azure waters,
And all which makes them eminent and bright,
Shall be a desolation and a curse,
A hissing and a scoff unto the nations,
A Carthage, and a Tyre, an Ocean-Babel!

ANGIOLINA.

Speak not thus now; the surge of passion still
Sweeps o'er thee to the last; thou dost deceive
Thyself and canst not injure them—be calmer.

DOGE.

I stand within eternity, and see

Into eternity, and I behold—
Ay, palpable as I see thy sweet face
For the last time—the days which I denounce
Unto all time against these wave-girt walls,
And they who are indwellers.

GUARD (*coming forward*).

Doge of Venice,
The Ten are in attendance on your highness.

DOGE.

Then farewell, Angiolina!—one embrace—
Forgive the old man who hath been to thee
A fond but fatal husband—love my memory—
I would not ask so much for me still living,
But thou canst judge of me more kindly now,
Seeing my evil feelings are at rest.
Besides, of all the fruit of these long years,
Glory, and wealth, and power, and fame, and
name,
Which generally leave some flowers to bloom
Even o'er the grave, I have nothing left, not even
A little love, or friendship, or esteem,
No, not enough to extract an epitaph
From ostentatious kinsmen; in one hour
I have uprooted all my former life,

And outlived every thing, except thy heart,
The pure, the good, the gentle, which will oft
With unimpair'd but not a clamourous grief
Still keep——Thou turn'st so pale—Alas! she
faints,
She hath no breath, no pulse! Guards! lend your
aid—
I cannot leave her thus, and yet 'tis better,
Since every lifeless moment spares a pang.
When she shakes off this temporary death,
I shall be with the Eternal.—Call her women—
One look!—how cold her hand! as cold as mine
Shall be ere she recovers.—Gently tend her,
And take my last thanks.——I am ready now.

[*The Attendants of* ANGIOLINA *enter and surround their mistress, who has fainted.—Exeunt the* DOGE, *Guards, etc. etc.*

SCENE III.

The Court of the Ducal Palace: the outer gates are shut against the people.—The Doge *enters in his ducal robes, in procession with the Council of Ten and other Patricians, attended by the Guards till they arrive at the top of the "Giant's Staircase," (where the Doges took the oaths); the Executioner is stationed there with his sword. On arriving, a Chief of the Ten takes off the ducal cap from the Doge's head.*

DOGE.

So, now the Doge is nothing, and at last
I am again Marino Faliero:
'Tis well to be so, though but for a moment.
Here was I crown'd, and here, bear witness.
Heaven!
With how much more contentment I resign
That shining mockery, the ducal bauble,
Than I received the fatal ornament.

ONE OF THE TEN.

Thou tremblest, Faliero!

DOGE.

'Tis with age, then.

BENINTENDE.

Faliero! hast thou aught further to commend,
Compatible with justice, to the senate?

DOGE.

I would commend my nephew to their mercy,
My consort to their justice; for methinks
My death, and such a death, might settle all
Between the state and me.

BENINTENDE.

They shall be cared for;
Even notwithstanding thine unheard-of crime.

DOGE.

Unheard-of! ay, there's not a history
But shows a thousand crown'd conspirators
Against the people; but to set them free
One sovereign only died, and one is dying.

BENINTENDE.

And who are they who fell in such a cause?

DOGE.

The King of Sparta, and the Doge of Venice—
Agis and Faliero!

BENINTENDE.

Hast thou more
To utter or to do?

DOGE.

May I speak?

BENINTENDE.

Thou may'st;

But recollect the people are without,
Beyond the compass of the human voice.

DOGE.

I speak to Time and to Eternity,
Of which I grow a portion, not to man.
Ye elements! in which to be resolved
I hasten, let my voice be as a spirit
Upon you! Ye blue waves! which bore my banner,
Ye winds! which flutter'd o'er as if you loved it,
And fill'd my swelling sails as they were wafted
To many a triumph! Thou, my native earth,
Which I have bled for, and thou foreign earth,
Which drank this willing blood from many a wound!
Ye stones, in which my gore will not sink, but
Reek up to Heaven! Ye skies, which will receive it!
Thou sun! which shinest on these things, and Thou!

Who kindlest and who quenchest suns!—Attest
I am not innocent—but are these guiltless?
I perish, but not unavenged; far ages
Float up from the abyss of time to be,
And show these eyes, before they close, the doom
Of this proud city, and I leave my curse
On her and hers for ever!——Yes, the hours
Are silently engendering of the day,
When she who built 'gainst Attila a bulwark,
Shall yield, and bloodlessly and basely yield
Unto a bastard Attila, without
Shedding so much blood in her last defence
As these old veins, oft drain'd in shielding her,
Shall pour in sacrifice.—She shall be bought
And sold, and be an appanage to those
Who shall despise her!—She shall stoop to be
A province for an empire, petty town
In lieu of capital, with slaves for senates,
Beggars for nobles, panders for a people! [10]
Then, when the Hebrew's in thy palaces, [11]
The Hun in thy high places, and the Greek
Walks o'er thy mart, and smiles on it for his!
When thy patricians beg their bitter bread
In narrow streets, and in their shameful need

Make their nobility a plea for pity!
Then, when the few who still retain a wreck
Of their great fathers' heritage shall fawn
Round a barbarian Vice of Kings' Vice-gerent,
Even in the palace where they sway'd as sovereigns,
Even in the palace where they slew their sovereign,
Proud of some name they have disgraced, or sprung
From an adulteress boastful of her guilt
With some large gondolier or foreign soldier,
Shall bear about their bastardy in triumph
To the third spurious generation ;—when
Thy sons are in the lowest scale of being,
Slaves turn'd o'er to the vanquish'd by the victors,
Despised by cowards for greater cowardice,
And scorn'd even by the vicious for such vices
As in the monstrous grasp of their conception
Defy all codes to image or to name them ;
Then, when of Cyprus, now thy subject kingdom,
All thine inheritance shall be her shame
Entail'd on thy less virtuous daughters, grown
A wider proverb for worse prostitution ;—
When all the ills of conquer'd states shall cling thee,
Vice without splendour, sin without relief

Even from the gloss of love to smooth it o'er,
But in its stead coarse lusts of habitude,
Prurient yet passionless, cold studied lewdness,
Depraving nature's frailty to an art;—
When these and more are heavy on thee, when
Smiles without mirth, and pastimes without
pleasure,
Youth without honour, age without respect,
Meanness and weakness, and a sense of woe
'Gainst which thou wilt not strive, and dar'st not
murmur,
Have made thee last and worst of peopled deserts;
Then, in the last gasp of thine agony,
Amidst thy many murders, think of *mine!*
Thou den of drunkards with the blood of
princes![12]
Gehenna of the waters! thou sea Sodom!
Thus I devote thee to the infernal gods!
Thee and thy serpent seed!

[*Here the* Doge *turns, and addresses the Executioner.*

Slave, do thine office;
Strike as I struck the foe! Strike as I would

Have struck those tyrants! Strike deep as my
curse!
Strike—and but once!

[*The* DOGE *throws himself upon his knees, and, as the Executioner raises his sword, the scene closes.*

SCENE IV.

The Piazza and Piazzetta of Saint Mark's.—The People in crowds gathered round the grated gates of the Ducal Palace, which are shut.

FIRST CITIZEN.

I have gain'd the gate, and can discern the Ten,
Robed in their gowns of state, ranged round the
Doge.

SECOND CITIZEN.

I cannot reach thee with mine utmost effort.
How is it? let us hear at least, since sight
Is thus prohibited unto the people,
Except the occupiers of those bars.

FIRST CITIZEN.

One has approach'd the Doge, and now they strip
The ducal bonnet from his head—and now

He raises his keen eyes to Heaven. I see
Them glitter and his lips move—Hush! hush!—
No,
'Twas but a murmur—Curse upon the distance!
His words are inarticulate, but the voice
Swells up like mutter'd thunder; would we could
But gather a sole sentence!

SECOND CITIZEN.

Hush! we perhaps may catch the sound.

FIRST CITIZEN.

'Tis vain.
I cannot hear him.—How his hoary hair
Streams on the wind like foam upon the wave!
Now—now—he kneels—and now they form a
circle
Round him, and all is hidden—but I see
The lifted sword in air——Ah! hark! it falls!

[*The people murmur.*

THIRD CITIZEN.

Then they have murder'd him who would have
freed us.

FOURTH CITIZEN.

He was a kind man to the commons ever.

FIFTH CITIZEN.

Wisely they did to keep their portals barr'd.
Would we had known the work they were preparing
Ere we were summon'd here; we would have brought
Weapons, and forced them!

SIXTH CITIZEN.

Are you sure he's dead?

FIRST CITIZEN.

I saw the sword fall—Lo! what have we here?

[*Enter on the Balcony of the Palace which fronts Saint Mark's Place a* CHIEF OF THE TEN,[15] *with a bloody sword. He waves it thrice before the People, and exclaims,*

"Justice hath dealt upon the mighty Traitor!"

[*The gates are opened; the populace rush in towards the "Giant's Staircase," where the execution has taken place. The foremost of them exclaims to those behind,*

The gory head rolls down the "Giant's Steps!"

[*The curtain falls.*

NOTES.

Note 1.

I smote the tardy bishop at Treviso.

Page 40, line 4.

An historical fact. See Marin Sanuto's Lives of the Doges.

Note 2.

A gondola with one oar only.

Page 57, line 14.

A gondola is not like a common boat, but is as easily rowed with one oar as with two (though of course not so swiftly), and often is so from motives of privacy, and (since the decay of Venice) of economy.

Note 3.

They think themselves
Engaged in secret to the Signory.

Page 109, lines 9 and 10

An historical fact.

Note 4.

Within our palace precincts at San Polo.

Page 158, line 12.

The Doge's private family palace.

Note 5.

"*Signor of the Night.*"

Page 168, line 15

"I Signori di Notte" held an important charge in the old Republic.

Note 6.

Festal Thursday.

Page 183, line 19.

"Giovedì *Grasso*," "*fat* or greasy Thursday," which I cannot literally translate in the text, was the day.

Note 7.

Guards! let their mouths be gagg'd, even in the act

Page 184, line 9.

Historical fact. See Sanuto, in the Appendix to this tragedy.

Note 8.

Say, conscript fathers, shall she be admitted?

Page 195, line 20.

The Venetian senate took the same title as the Roman, of "Conscript Fathers."

Note 9.

'Tis with age, then.

Page 217, last line

This was the actual reply of Bailli, maire of Paris, to a Frenchman who made him the same reproach on his way to execution, in the earliest part of their revolution. I find in reading over (since the completion of this tragedy), for the first time these six years, "Venice

Preserved," a similar reply on a different occasion by Renault, and other coincidences arising from the subject. I need hardly remind the gentlest reader, that such coincidences must be accidental, from the very facility of their detection by reference to so popular a play on the stage and in the closet as Otway's *chef-d'œuvre.*

Note 10.

Beggars for nobles, panders for a people!

Page 220, line 19.

Should the dramatic picture seem harsh, let the reader look to the historical, of the period prophesied, or rather of the few years preceding that period. Voltaire calculated their "nostre benemerite Meretrici" at 12,000 of regulars, without including volunteers and local militia, on what authority I know not; but it is perhaps the only part of the population not decreased. Venice once contained 200,000 inhabitants; there are now about 90,000, and THESE!! Few individuals can conceive, and none could describe the actual state into which the more than infernal tyranny of Austria has plunged this unhappy city.

Note 11.

Then, when the Hebrew's in thy palaces.

Page 220, line 20.

The chief palaces on the Brenta now belong to the Jews; who in the earlier times of the Republic were only allowed to inhabit Mestri, and not to enter the city of Venice. The whole commerce is in the hands of the Jews and Greeks, and the Huns form the garrison.

Note 12.

Thou den of drunkards with the blood of princes!
Page 222, line 16.

Of the first fifty Doges, *five* abdicated—*five* were banished with their eyes put out—*five* were MASSACRED—and *nine* deposed; so that *nineteen* out of fifty lost the throne by violence, besides two who fell in battle: this occurred long previous to the reign of Marino Faliero. One of his more immediate predecessors, Andrea Dandolo, died of vexation. Marino Faliero himself perished as related. Amongst his successors, *Foscari*, after seeing his son repeatedly tortured and banished, was deposed, and died of breaking a blood-vessel, on hearing the bell of Saint Mark's toll for the election of his successor. Morosini was impeached for the loss of Candia; but this was previous to his dukedom, during which he conquered the Morea, and was styled the Peloponnesian. Faliero might truly say,

"Thou den of drunkards with the blood of princes!"

Note 13.

Chief of the Ten.
Page 225, line 13.

"Un Capo de' Dieci" are the words of Sanuto's Chronicle.

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX.

I.

MCCCLIV.

MARINO FALIERO, DOGE XLIX.

"Fu eletto da quarantuno Elettori, il quale era Cavaliere e conte di Valdemarino in Trivigiana, ed era ricco, e si trovava Ambasciadore a Roma. E a dì 9. di Settembre, dopo sepolto il suo predecessore, fu chiamato il gran Consiglio, e fu preso di fare il Doge giusta il solito. E furono fatti i cinque Correttori, Ser Bernardo Giustiniani Procuratore, Ser Paolo Loredano, Ser Filippo Aurio, Ser Pietro Trivisano, e Ser Tommaso Viadro. I quali a dì 10. misero queste correzioni alla promessione del Doge: che i Consiglieri non odano gli Oratori e Nunzi de' Signori, senza i Capi de' quaranta, nè possano rispondere ad alcuno, se non saranno quattro Consiglieri e due Capi de' Quaranta. E che osservino la forma del suo Capitolare. E che Messer lo Doge si metta nella miglior parte, quando i Giudici tra loro non fossero d'accordo. E ch' egli non possa far vendere i suoi imprestiti, salvo con legittima causa, e col voler di cinque Consiglieri, di due Capi de' Quaranta, e delle due parti del Consiglio de' Pregati. *Item*, che in luogo di tre mila pelli di Conigli, che debbon dare i Zaratini per re-

galia al Doge, non trovandosi tante pelli, gli diano Ducati ottanta l' anno. E poi a dì 11. detto, misero *etiam* altre correzioni, che se il Doge, che sarà eletto, fosse fuori di Venezia, i Savj possano provvedere del suo ritorno. E quando fosse il Doge ammalato, sia Vicedoge uno de' Consiglieri, da essere eletto tra loro. E che il detto sia nominato Viceluogotenente di Messer lo Doge, quando i Giudici faranno i suoi atti. E nota, perchè fu fatto Doge uno, ch'era assente, che fu Vicedoge Ser Marino Badoero più vecchio de' Consiglieri. *Item*, che'l governo del Ducato sia commesso a' Consiglieri, e a' Capi de' Quaranta, quando vacherà il Ducato, finchè sarà elletto l' altro Doge. E così a dì 11. di Settembre fu creato il prefato Marino Faliero Doge. E fu preso, che il governo del Ducato sia commesso a' Consiglieri e a' Capi de' Quaranta. I quali stiano in Palazzo di continuo, fino che verrà il Doge. Sicchè di continuo stiano in Palazzo due Consiglieri e un Capo de' Quaranta. E subito furono spedite lettere al detto Doge, il quale era a Roma Oratore al Legato di Papa Innocenzo VI. ch'era in Avignone. Fu preso nel gran Consiglio d'eleggere dodici Ambasciadori incontro a Marino Faliero Doge il quale veniva da Roma. E giunto a Chioggia, il Podestà mandò Taddeo Giustiniani suo figliuolo incontro, con quindici Ganzaruoli. E poi venuto a S. Clemente nel Bucintoro, venne un gran caligo, *adeo* che il Bucintoro non si potè levare. Laonde il Doge co' Gentiluomini nelle piatte vennero di lungo in questa Terra a' 5. d' Ottobre del 1354. E dovendo smontare alla riva della Paglia per lo caligo andarono ad ismontare alla riva della Piazza in mezzo alle due Colonne dove si fà la Giustizia, che fu un malissimo augu-

[illegible]. E a' 6. la mattina venne alla Chiesa di San Marco alla laudazione di quello. Era in questo tempo Cancellier Grande Messer Benintende. I quarantuno Elettori furono, Ser Giovanni Contarini, Ser Andrea Giustiniani, Ser Michele Morosini, Ser Simone Dandolo, Ser Pietro Lando, Ser Marino Gradenigo, Ser Marco Dolfino, Ser Nicolò Faliero, Ser Giovanni Quirini, Ser Lorenzo Soranzo, Ser Marco Bembo, Sere Stefano Belegno, Ser Francesco Loredano, Ser Marino Veniero, Ser Giovanni Mocenigo, Ser Andrea Barbaro, Ser Lorenzo Barbarigo, Ser Bettino da Mollino, Ser' Andrea Erizzo Procuratore, Ser Marco Celsi, Ser Paolo Donato, Ser Bertucci Grimani, Ser Pietro Steno, Ser Luca Duodo, Ser' Andrea Pisani, Ser Francesco Caravello, Ser Jacopo Trivisano, Sere Schiavo Marcello, Ser Maffeo Aimo, Ser Marco Capello, Ser Pancrazio Giorgio, Ser Giovanni Foscarini, Ser Tommaso Viadro, Sere Schiava Polani, Ser Marco Polo, Ser Marino Sagredo, Sere Stefano Mariani, Ser Francesco Suriano, Ser Orio Pasqualigo, Ser' Andrea Gritti, Ser Buono da Mosto.

* * * *

" *Trattato di Messer Marino Faliero Doge, tratto da una Cronica antica.* Essendo venuto il Giovedì della Caccia, fu fatta giusta il solito la Caccia. E a' que' tempi dopo fatta la Caccia s' andava in Pallazo del Doge in una di quelle Sale, e con donne facevasi una festicciuola, dove si ballava fino alla prima Campana, e veniva una Colazione ; la quale spesa faceva Messer lo Doge, quando v' era la Dogaressa. E poscia tutti andavano a casa sua. Sopra la qual festa, pare, che Ser Michele Steno, molto giovane e povero Gentiluomo, ma ardito e astuto, il qual' era innamorato in certa donzella

della Dogaressa, essendo sul Solajo appresso le Donne facesse cert' atto non conveniente, *adeo* che il Doge comandò ch'e' fosse buttato giù dal Solajo. E così quegli Scudieri del Doge lo spinsero giù di quel Solajo. Laonde a Ser Michele parve, che fossegli stata fatta troppo grande ignominia. E non considerando altramente il fine, ma sopra quella passione fornita la Festa, e andati tutti via, quella notte egli andò, e sulla cadrega, dove sedeva il Doge nella Sala dell' Udienza (perchè allora i Dogi non tenevano panno di seta sopra la cadrega, ma sedevano in una cadrega di legno) scrisse alcune parole disoneste del Doge e della Dogaressa, cioè: *Marin Faliero dalla bella moglie: Altri la gode, ed egli la mantiene.* E la mattina furono vedute tali parole scritte. E parve una brutta cosa. E per la Signoria fu commessa la cosa agli Avvogadori del Comune con grande efficacia. I quali Avvogadori subito diedero taglia grande per venire in chiaro della verità di chi avea scritto tal lettera. E tandem si seppe, che Michele Steno aveale scritte. E fu per la Quarantia preso di ritenerlo; e ritenuto confessò, che in quella passione d' essere stato spinto giù dal Solajo, presente la sua amante, egli aveale scritte. Onde poi fu placitato nel detto Consiglio, e parve al Consiglio si per rispetto all' età, come per la caldezza d'amore, di condannarlo a compiere due mesi in prigione serrato, e poi ch' e' fusse bandito di Venezia e dal distretto per un'anno. Per la qual condennagione tanto piccola il Doge ne prese grande sdegno, parendogli che non fosse stata fatta quella estimazione della cosa, che ricercava la sua dignità del Ducato. E diceva, ch' eglino doveano averlo fatto appiccare per la gola, o *saltem* bandirlo in perpetuo da Venezia. E perchè

(quando dee succedere un' effetto è necessario che vi concorra la cagione a fare tal' effetto) era destinato, che a Messer Marino Doge fosse tagliata la testa, perciò occorse, che entrata la Quaresima il giorno dopo che fu condannato il detto Ser Michele Steno, un Gentiluomo da Cà Barbaro, di natura collerico, andasse all' Arsenale, domandasse certe cose ai Padroni, ed era alla presenza de' Signori l'Ammiraglio dell' Arsenale. Il quale intesa la domanda, disse, che non si poteva fare. Quel Gentiluomo venne a parole coll' Ammiraglio, e diedegli un pugno su un'occhio. E perchè avea un'anello in dito, coll' anello gli ruppe la pelle, e fece sangue. E l'Ammiraglio cosi battuto e insanguinato andò al Doge a lamentarsi, acciocchè il Doge facesse fare gran punizione contra il detto da Cà Barbaro: Il Doge disse: *Che vuoi che ti faccia? Guarda le ignominiose parole scritte di me, e il modo ch'è stato punito quel ribaldo di Michele Steno, che le scrisse. E quale stima hanno i Quaranta fatto della persona nostra.* Laonde l' Ammiraglio gli disse: *Messer lo Doge, se voi volete farvi Signore, e fare tagliare tutti questi becchi Gentiluomini a pezzi, mi basta l'animo, dandomi voi ajuto, di farvi Signore di questa Terra. E allora voi potrete castigare tutti costoro.* Intese queste, il Doge disse, *Come si può fare una simile cosa?* E così entrarono in ragionamento.

"Il Doge mandò a chiamare Ser Bertucci Faliero suo nipote, il quale stava con lui in Palazzo, e entrarono in questa macchinazione. Nè si partirono di lì, che mandarono per Filippo Calendaro, uomo marittimo e di gran seguito, e per Bertucci Israello, ingegnere e uomo astutissimo. E consigliatisi insieme diede ordine di chiamare alcuni altri. E così per alcuni giorni la notte si

riducevano insieme in Palazzo in casa del Doge. E chiamarono a parte a parte altri, *videlicet* Niccolò Fagiuolo, Giovanni da Corfù, Stefano Fagiano, Niccolò dalle Bende, Niccolò Biondo, e Stefano Trivisano. E ordinò di fare sedici o diciassette Capi in diversi luoghi della Terra, i quali avessero cadaun di loro quarant'uomini provvigionati, preparati, non dicendo a' detti suoi quaranta quello, che volessero fare. Ma che il giorno stabilito si mostrasse di far quistione tra loro in diversi luoghi, acciocchè il Doge facesse sonare a San Marco le Campane, le quali non si possono suonare, s' egli nol comanda. E al suono delle Campane questi sedici o diciassette co' suoi uomini venissero a San Marco alle strade, che buttano in Piazza. E così i nobili e primarj Cittadini, che venissero in Piazza, per sapere del romore ciò ch'era, li tagliassero a pezzi. E seguito questo, che fosse chiamato per Signore Messer Marino Faliero Doge. E fermate le cose tra loro, stabilito fu, che questo dovess' essere a' 15. d'Aprile del 1355. in giorno di Mercoledì. La quale macchinazione trattata fu tra loro tanto segretamente, che mai nè pure se ne sospettò, non che se ne sapesse cos' alcuna. Ma il Signor' Iddio, che ha sempre ajutato questa gloriosissima Città, e che per le santimonie e giustizie sue mai non l'ha abbandonata, ispirò a un Beltramo Bergamasco, il quale fu messo Capo di quarant' uomini per uno de' detti congiurati (il quale intese qualche parola, sicché comprese l'effetto, che doveva succedere, e il qual era di casa di Ser Niccolò Lioni di Santo Stefano) di andare a dì . . . . . d'Aprile a Casa del detto Ser Niccolò Lioni. E gli disse ogni cosa dell' ordin dato. Il quale intese le cose, rimase come morto; e intese molte particolarità, il detto

Beltramo il pregò che lo tenesse segreto, e glielo disse, acciocchè il detto Ser Niccolò non si partisse di casa a dì 15 acciochè egli non fosse morto. Ed egli volendo partirsi, il fece ritenere a suoi di casa, e serrarlo in una camera. Ed esso andò a casa di M. Giovanni Gradenigo Nasone, il quale fu poi Doge, che stava anch' egli a Santo Stefano; e dissegli la cosa. La quale parendogli, com'era, d'una grandissima importanza, tutti e due andarono a casa di Ser Marco Cornaro, che stava a San Felice. E dettogli il tutto, tutti e tre deliberarono di venire a casa del detto Ser Niccolò Lioni, ed esaminare il detto Beltramo. E quello esaminato, intese le cose, il fecero stare serrato. E andarono tutti e tre a San Salvatore in Sacristia, e mandarono i loro famigli a chiamare i Consiglieri, gli Avvogadori, i Capi de' Dieci, e que' del Consiglio. E ridotti insieme dissero loro le cose. I quali rimasero morti. E deliberarono di mandare pel detto Beltramo, e fattolo venire cautamente, ed esaminatolo, e verificate le cose, ancorchè ne sentissero gran passione, pure pensarono la provvisione. E mandarono pe' Capi de' Quaranta, pe' Signori di notte, pe' Capi de' Sestieri, e pe' Cinque della Pace. E ordinato, ch' eglino co' loro uomini trovassero degli altri buoni uomini, e mandassero a casa de' Capi de' congiurati, *ut supra* mettessero loro le mani addosso. E tolsero i detti le Maestrerie dell' Arsenale, acciocchè i provvisionati de' congiurati non potessero offenderli. E si ridussero in Palazzo verso la sera. Dove ridotti fecero serrare le porte de la corte del Palazzo. E mandarono a ordinare al Campanaro, che non sonasse le Campane. E così fu eseguito, e messe le mani addosso a tutti i nominati di sopra, furono que' condotti al

Palazzo. E vedendo il Consiglio de' Dieci, che il Doge era nella cospirazione, presero di eleggere venti de' primarj della Terra, di giunta al detto Consiglio a consigliare, non però che potessero mettere pallotta.

"I Consiglieri furono questi: Ser Giovanni Mocenigo del Sestiero di San Marco; Ser Almorò Veniero da Santa Marina del Sestiero di Castello; Ser Tommaso Viadro del Sestiero di Caneregio; Ser Giovanni Sanudo del Sestiero di Santa Croce; Ser Pietro Trivisano del Sestiero di San Paolo, Ser Pantalione Barbo il Grande del Sestiero d'Ossoduro. Gli Avogadori del Comune furono Ser Zufredo Morosini, e Ser Orio Pasqualigo, e questi non ballottarono. Que' del Consiglio de' Dieci: furono Ser Giovanni Marcello, Ser Tommaso Sanudo, e Ser Michelento Dolfino, Capi del detto Consiglio de' Dieci; Ser Luca da Legge, e Ser Pietro da Mosto, Inquisitori del detto Consiglio; Ser Marco Polani, Ser Marino Veniero, Ser Lando Lombardo, Ser Nicoletto Trivisano da Sant' Angiolo. Questi elessero tra loro una Giunta, nella notte ridotti quasi sul romper del giorno, di venti Nobili di Venezia de' migliori, de' più Savj, e de' più antichi, per consultare, non però che mettessero pallottola. E non vi vollero alcuno da Cà Faliero. E cacciarono fuori del Consiglio Niccolò Faliero, e un' altro Niccolò Faliero da San Tommaso, per essere della Casata del Doge. E questa provigione di chiamare i venti della Giunta fu molto commendata per tutta la Terra. Questi furono i venti della Giunta, Ser Marco Giustiniani Procuratore, Ser' Andrea Erizzo Procuratore, Ser Lionardo Giustiniani Procuratore, Ser' Andrea Contarini, Ser Simone Dandolo, Ser Niccolò Volpe, Ser Giovanni Loredano, Ser Marco Diedo, Ser Giovanni Gra-

denigo. Ser Andrea Cornaro Cavaliere, Ser Marco Soranzo, Ser Rinieri da Mosto, Ser Gazano Marcello, Ser Marino Morosino, Sere Stefano Belegno, Ser Niccolò Lioni, Ser Filippo Orio, Ser Marco Trivisano, Ser Jacopo Bragadino, Ser Giovanni Foscarini. E chiamati questi venti nel Consiglio de' Dieci, fu mandato per Messer Marino Faliero Doge, il quale andava pel Palazzo con gran gente, gentiluomini, e altra buona gente, che non sapeano ancora come il fatto stava. In questo tempo fu condotto, preso, e legato, Bertuccio Israello, uno de' Capi del trattato per que' di Santa Croce, e ancora fu preso Zanello del Brin, Nicoletto di Rosa, e Nicoletto Alberto, il Guardiaga, e altri uomini da mare, e d' altre condizioni. I quali furono esaminati, e trovata la verità del tradimento. A dì 16. d'Aprile fu sentenziato pel detto Consiglio de' Dieci, che Filippo Calandario, e Bertucci Israello fossero appiccati alle Colonne rosse del balconate del Palazzo, nelle quali sta a vedere il Doge la festa della Caccia. E così furono appiccati con spranghe in bocca. E nel giorno seguente questi furono condannati. Niccolò Zuccuolo, Nicoletto Blondo, Nicoletto Doro, Marco Geuda, Jacomello Dagolino, Nicoletto Fedele figliuolo di Filippo Calendaro, Marco Torello detto Israello, Stefano Trivisano Cambiatore di Santa Margherita, Antonio dalle Bende. Furono tutti presi a Chioggia, che fuggivano, e dipoi in diversi giorni a due a due, e a uno a uno, per sentenza fatta nel detto Consiglio de' Dieci, furono appiccati per la gola alle Colonne, continuando dalle rosse del Palazzo, seguendo fin verso il Canale. E altri presi furono lasciati, perchè sentirono il fatto, ma non vi furono tal che fu dato loro ad intendere per questi capi, che venissero coll' arme,

per prendere alcuni malfattori in servigio della Signoria, nè altro sapeano. Fu ancora liberato Nicoletto Alberto, il Guardiaga, e Bartolommeo Ciriuola, e suo figliuolo. e molti altri, che non erano in colpa.

"E a dì 16. d' Aprile, giorno di Venerdì, fu sentenziato nel detto Consiglio de' Dieci, di tagliare la testa a Messer Marino Faliero Doge sul pato della Scala di pietra, dove i Dogi giurano il primo sagramento, quando montano prima in Palazzo. E così serrato il Palazzo, la mattina seguente a ora di Terza, fu tagliata la testa al detto Doge a dì 17. d'Aprile. E prima la beretta fu tolta di testa al detto Doge. avanti che venisse giù dalla Scala. E compiuta la giustizia, pare che un Capo de' Dieci andasse alle Colonne del Palazzo sopra la Piazza, e mostrasse la spada insanguinata a tutti, dicendo: *E stata fatta la gran giustizia del Traditore*. E aperta la Porta tutti entrarono dentro con gran furia a vedere il Doge. ch' era stato giustiziato. E' da sapere, che a fare la detta giustizia non fu Ser Giovanni Sanudo il Consigliere, perchè era andato a casa per difetto della persona, sicchè furono quatordici soli, che ballottarono, cioè cinque Consiglieri, e nove del Consiglio de' Dieci. E fu preso, che tutti i beni del Doge fossero confiscati nel Comune, e così degli altri traditori. E fu conceduto al detto Doge pel detto Consiglio de' Dieci, ch' egli potesse ordinare del suo per Ducati due mila. Ancora fu preso, che tutti i Consiglieri, e Avogadori del Comune, que' del Consiglio de' Dieci, e della Giunta, ch' erano stati a fare la detta sentenza del Doge, e d'altri, avessero licenza di portar' arme di dì e di notte in Venezia e da Grado fino a Cavarzere, ch' è sotto il Dogato, con due fanti in vita loro, stando i fanti con essi in casa al suo

pane e al suo vino. E chi non avesse fanti, potesse dar tal licenza a' suoi figliuoli ovvero fratelli, due però e non più. Eziandio fu data licenza dell' arme a quattro Notaj della Cancelleria, cioè della Corte Maggiore, che furono a prendere le deposizioni e inquisizioni; in perpetuo a loro soli, i quali furono Amadio, Nicoletto di Loreno, Steffanello, e Pietro de' Compostelli, Scrivani de' Signori di notte. Ed essendo stati impiccati i traditori, e tagliata la testa al Doge, rimase la Terra in gran riposo, e quiete. E come in una Cronica ho trovato, fu portato il Corpo del Doge in una barca con otto doppieri a seppelire nella sua arca a San Giovanni e Paolo, la quale al presente è in quell' andito per mezzo la Chiesuola di Santa Maria della Pace, fatta fare pel Vescovo Gabriello di Bergamo, e un Cassone di Pietra con queste lettere. *Heic jacet Dominus Marinus Faletro Dux.* E nel gran Consiglio non gli è stato fatto alcun Brieve, ma il luogo vacuo con lettere, che dicono così. *Hic est locus Marini Faletro, decapitati pro criminibus.* E pare, che la sua casa fosse data alla Chiesa di Sant' Apostolo, la qual era quella grande sul Ponte. *Tamen* vedo il contrario che è pure di Cà Faliero, o che i Falieri la ricuperassero con danari dalla Chiesa. Nè voglio restar di scrivere alcuni, che volevano, che fosse messo nel suo breve, cioè: *Marinus Faletro Dux. Temeritas me cepit. Pœnas lui, decapitatus pro criminibus.* Altri vi fecero un Distico assai degno al suo merito, il quale è questo, da essere posto su la sua sepultura:

"*Dux Venetum jacet heic, patriam qui prodere tentans,*
"*Sceptra, decus, censum, perdidit, atque caput.*"

* * * * *

"Non voglio restar di scrivere quello che ho letto in

una Cronica, cioè, che Marino Faliero trovandosi Podestà e Capitano a Treviso, e dovendosi fare una Processione, il Vescovo stette troppo a far venire il Corpo di Cristo. Il detto Faliero era di tanta superbia e arroganza, che diede un buffetto al prefato Vescovo, per modo ch' egli quasi cadde in terra. Però fu permesso, che il Faliero perdette l'intelletto, e fece la mala morte, come ho scritto di sopra."

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II.

MCCCLIV.
MARINO FALIERO, DOGE XLIX

On the eleventh day of September, in the year of our Lord 1354, Marino Faliero was elected and chosen to be the Duke of the Commonwealth of Venice. He was Count of Valdemarino, in the Marches of Treviso, and a Knight and a wealthy man to boot. As soon as the election was completed, it was resolved in the Great Council, that a deputation of twelve should be dispatched to Marino Faliero the Duke, who was then on his way from Rome; for, when he was chosen, he was Embassador at the court of the Holy Father, at Rome, —the Holy Father himself held his court at Avignon. When Messer Marino Faliero the Duke was about to land in this city, on the fifth day of October, 1354, a thick haze came on, and darkened the air; and he was enforced to land on the place of Saint Mark, between the two columns on the spot where evil doers are put to death; and all thought that this was the worst of tokens.—Nor must I forget to write that which I have read in a chronicle.—When Messer Marino Faliero was podesta and Captain of Treviso, the Bishop delayed coming in with the holy sacrament, on a day when a procession was to take place. Now the said Marino Faliero was so very proud and wrathful that he buffeted

the Bishop, and almost struck him to the ground. And, therefore, Heaven allowed Marino Faliero to go out of his right senses, in order that he might bring himself to an evil death.

When this Duke had held the Dukedom during nine months and six days, he being wicked and ambitious, sought to make himself lord of Venice, in the manner which I have read in an ancient chronicle. When the Thursday arrived upon which they were wont to hunt the Bull, the Bull hunt took place as usual; and according to the usage of those times, after the Bull hunt had ended, they all proceeded unto the palace of the Duke, and assembled together in one of his halls; and they disported themselves with the women. And until the first bell tolled they danced, and then a banquet was served up. My Lord the Duke paid the expenses thereof, provided he had a Duchess, and after the banquet they all returned to their homes.

Now to this feast there came a certain Ser Michele Steno, a gentleman of poor estate and very young, but crafty and daring, and who loved one of the damsels of the Duchess. Ser Michele stood amongst the women upon the solajo; and he behaved indiscreetly, so that my Lord the Duke ordered that he should be kicked off the solajo; and the Esquires of the Duke flung him down from the solajo accordingly. Ser Michele thought that such an affront was beyond all bearing; and when the feast was over, and all other persons had left the palace, he, continuing heated with anger, went to the hall of audience, and wrote certain unseemly words relating to the Duke and the Duchess, upon the chair in which the Duke was used to sit; for in those days the

Duke did not cover his chair with cloth of sendal, but he sat in a chair of wood. Ser Michele wrote thereon —*Marin Falier, the husband of the fair wife; others kiss her, but he keeps her.*" In the morning the words were seen, and the matter was considered to be very scandalous; and the Senate commanded the Avogadori of the Commonwealth to proceed therein with the greatest diligence. A largesse of great amount was immediately proffered by the Avogadori in order to discover who had written these words. And at length it was known that Michele Steno had written them. It was resolved in the Council of Forty that he should be arrested; and he then confessed, that in a fit of vexation and spite, occasioned by his being thrust off the solajo in the presence of his mistress, he had written the words. Therefore the Council debated thereon. And the Council took his youth into consideration, and that he was a lover, and therefore they adjudged that he should be kept in close confinement during two months, and that afterwards he should be banished from Venice and the state during one year. In consequence of this merciful sentence the Duke became exceedingly wroth, it appearing to him that the Council had not acted in such a manner as was required by the respect due to his ducal dignity; and he said that they ought to have condemned Ser Michele to be hanged by the neck, or at least to be banished for life.

Now it was fated that my Lord Duke Marino was to have his head cut off. And as it is necessary when any effect is to be brought about, that the cause of such effect must happen, it therefore came to pass, that on the very day after sentence had been pronounced on Ser

Michele Steno, being the first day of Lent, a Gentleman of the house of Barbaro, a choleric Gentleman, went to the arsenal and required certain things of the masters of the galleys. This he did in the presence of the Admiral of the arsenal, and he, hearing the request, answered,—No, it cannot be done.—High words arose between the Gentleman and the Admiral, and the Gentleman struck him with his fist just above the eye; and as he happened to have a ring on his finger, the ring cut the Admiral and drew blood. The Admiral, all bruised and bloody, ran straight to the Duke to complain, and with the intent of praying him to inflict some heavy punishment upon the Gentlemen of Ca Barbaro.—"What wouldst thou have me do for thee?" answered the Duke;—"think upon the shameful gibe "which hath been written concerning me; and think "on the manner in which they have punished that "ribald Michele Steno, who wrote it; and see how "the Council of Forty respect our person."—Upon this the Admiral answered;—"My Lord Duke, if you "would wish to make yourself a Prince and to cut all "those cuckoldy gentlemen to pieces, I have the heart, "if you do but help me, to make you Prince of all this "state; and then you may punish them all."—Hearing this, the Duke said;—"How can such a matter "be brought about?"—and so they discoursed thereon.

The Duke called for his nephew Ser Bertuccio Faliero, who lived with him in the palace, and they communed about this plot. And without leaving the place, they sent for Philip Calendaro, a seaman of great repute, and for Bertuccio Israello, who was exceedingly wily and cunning. Then taking counsel

amongst themselves, they agreed to call in some others and so for several nights successively, they met with the Duke at home in his palace. And the following men were called in singly; to wit,—Niccolo Fagiuolo, Giovanni da Corfu, Stefano Fagiano, Niccolo dalle Bende. Niccolo Biondo, and Stefano Trivisiano.—It was concerted that sixteen or seventeen leaders should be stationed in various parts of the city, each being at the head of forty men, armed and prepared; but the followers were not to know their destination. On the appointed day they were to make affrays amongst themselves here and there, in order that the Duke might have a pretence for tolling the Bells of San Marco: these bells are never rung but by the order of the Duke. And at the sound of the Bells, these sixteen or seventeen, with their followers, were to come to San Marco, through the streets which open upon the Piazza. And when the noble and leading citizens should come into the Piazza, to know the cause of the riot, then the conspirators were to cut them in pieces; and this work being finished, my Lord Marino Faliero the Duke was to be proclaimed the Lord of Venice. Things having been thus settled, they agreed to fulfil their intent on Wednesday, the fifteenth day of April, in the year 1355. So covertly did they plot, that no one ever dreamt of their machinations.

But the Lord, who hath always helped this most glorious city, and who, loving its righteousness and holiness, hath never forsaken it, inspired one Beltramo Bergamasco to be the cause of bringing the plot to light in the following manner. This Beltramo, who belonged to Ser Niccolo Lioni of Santo Stefano, had heard a word

or two of what was to take place; and so, in the before-mentioned month of April, he went to the house of the aforesaid Ser Niccolo Lioni, and told him all the particulars of the plot. Ser Niccolo, when he heard all these things, was struck dead, as it were, with affright. He heard all the particulars, and Beltramo prayed him to keep it all secret; and, if he told Ser Niccolo, it was in order that Ser Niccolo might stop at home on the fifteenth of April, and thus save his life. Beltramo was going, but Ser Niccolo ordered his servants to lay hands upon him and lock him up. Ser Niccolo then went to the house of Messer Giovanni Gradenigo Nasoni, who afterwards became Duke, and who also lived at Santo Stefano, and told him all. The matter seemed to him to be of the very greatest importance, as indeed it was; and they two went to the house of Ser Marco Cornaro, who lived at San Felice, and, having spoken with him, they all three then determined to go back to the house of Ser Niccolo Lioni, to examine the said Beltramo; and having questioned him, and heard all that he had to say, they left him in confinement. And then they all three went into the sacristy of San Salvatore, and sent their men to summon the Counsellers, the Avogadori, the Capi de' Dieci, and those of the Great Council.

When all were assembled, the whole story was told to them. They were struck dead, as it were, with affright. They determined to send for Beltramo. He was brought in before them. They examined him and ascertained that the matter was true; and, although they were exceedingly troubled, yet they determined upon their measures. And they sent for the Capi de' Quaranta, the Signori di Notte, the Capi de' Sestieri, and

the Cinque della Pace; and they were ordered to associate to their men, other good men and true, who were to proceed to the houses of the ringleaders of the conspiracy and secure them. And they secured the foremen of the arsenal, in order that the conspirators might not do mischief. Towards nightfall they assembled in the palace. When they were assembled in the palace, they caused the gates of the quadrangle of the palace to be shut. And they sent to the keeper of the Bell-tower and forbade the tolling of the bells. All this was carried into effect. The before-mentioned conspirators were secured, and they were brought to the palace; and as the Council of Ten saw that the Duke was in the plot, they resolved that twenty of the leading men of the state should be associated to them, for the purpose of consultation and deliberation, but that they should not be allowed to ballot.

The counsellors were the following: Ser Giovanni Mocenigo, of the Sestiero of San Marco; Ser Almoro Veniero da Santa Marino, of the Sestiero of Castello, Ser Tomaso Viadro, of the Sestiero of Canaregio; Ser Giovanni Sanudo, of the Sestiero of Santa Croce; Ser Pietro Trivisano, of the Sestiero of San Paolo; Ser Pantalione Barbo i e Grando, of the Sestiero of Ossoduro. The Avogadori of the Commonwealth were Zufredo Morosini, and Ser Orio Pasqualigo; and these did not ballot. Those of the Council of Ten were Ser Giovanni Marcello, Ser Tomaso Sanudo, and Ser Micheletto Dolfino, the heads of the aforesaid Council of Ten. Ser Luca da Legge, and Ser Pietro da Mosto, inquisitors of the aforesaid Council. And Ser Marco Polani, Ser Ma-

rino Veniero. Ser Lando Lombardo, and Ser Nicoletto Trivisano, of Sant' Angelo.

Late in the night, just before the dawning, they chose a junto of twenty noblemen of Venice from amongst the wisest and the worthiest and the oldest. They were to give counsel, but not to ballot. And they would not admit any one of Cà Faliero. And Niccolo Faliero, and another Niccolo Faliero, of San Tomaso, were expelled from the Council, because they belonged to the family of the Doge. And this resolution of creating the junta of twenty was much praised throughout the state. The following were the members of the junta of twenty:—Ser Marco Giustiniani, Procuratore, Ser Andrea Erizzo, Procuratore, Ser Lionardo Giustiniani, Procuratore, Ser Andrea Contarini, Ser Simone Dandolo, Ser Nicolo Volpe, Ser Giovanni Loredano, Ser Marco Diedo, Ser Giovanni Gradenigo, Ser Andrea Cornaro Cavaliere, Ser Marco Soranzo, Ser Rinieri du Mosto, Ser Gazano Marcello, Ser Marino Morosini, Ser Stefano Belegno, Ser Nicolo Lioni, Ser Filippo Orio, Ser Marco Trivisano, Ser Jacopo Bragadino, Ser Giovanni Foscarini.

These twenty were accordingly called in to the Council of Ten; and they sent for my Lord Marino Faliero the Duke; and my Lord Marino was then consorting in the palace with people of great estate, gentlemen, and other good men, none of whom knew yet how the fact stood.

At the same time Bertuccio Israello, who, as one of the ringleaders, was to head the conspirators in Santa Croce, was arrested and bound, and brought before the

Council. Zanello del Brin, Nicoletto di Rosa, Nicoletto Alberto, and the Guardiaga, were also taken, together with several seamen, and people of various ranks. These were examined, and the truth of the plot was ascertained.

On the sixteenth of April judgment was given in the Council of Ten, that Filippo Calendario and Bertuccio Israello should be hanged upon the red pillars of the balcony of the palace, from which the Duke is wont to look at the Bull-hunt: and they were hanged with gags in their mouths.

The next day the following were condemned:—Niccolo Zuccuolo, Nicoletto Blondo, Nicoletto Doro, Marco Giuda, Jacomello Dagolino, Nicoletto Fidele, the son of Filippo Calendaro, Marco Torello, called Israello, Stefano Trivisano, the money-changer of Santa Margherita, and Antonio dalle Bende. These were all taken at Chiozza, for they were endeavouring to escape. Afterwards, by virtue of the sentence which was passed upon them in the Council of Ten, they were hanged on successive days, some singly and some in couples, upon the columns of the palace, beginning from the red columns, and so going onwards towards the canal. And other prisoners were discharged, because, although they had been involved in the conspiracy, yet they had not assisted in it: for they were given to understand by some of the heads of the plot, that they were to come armed and prepared for the service of the state, and in order to secure certain criminals, and they knew nothing else. Nicoletto Alberto, the Guardiaga, and Bartolommeo Ciruola and his son, and several others, who were not guilty, were discharged.

On Friday, the sixteenth day of April, judgment was also given, in the aforesaid Council of Ten, that my Lord Marino Faliero, the Duke, should have his head cut off, and that the execution should be done on the landing-place of the stone staircase, where the Dukes take their oath when they first enter the palace. On the following day, the seventeenth of April, the doors of the palace being shut, the Duke had his head cut off, about the hour of noon. And the cap of estate was taken from the Duke's head before he came down stairs. When the execution was over, it is said that one of the Council of Ten went to the columns of the palace over against the place of St. Mark, and that he showed the bloody sword unto the people, crying out with a loud voice—"The terrible doom hath fallen upon the traitor!"—and the doors were opened, and the people all rushed in, to see the corpse of the Duke, who had been beheaded.

It must be known, that Ser Giovanni Sanudo, the councillor, was not present when the aforesaid sentence was pronounced; because he was unwell and remained at home. So that only fourteen ballotted; that is to say, five councillors, and nine of the Council of Ten. And it was adjudged, that all the lands and chattels of the Duke, as well as of the other traitors, should be forfeited to the state. And, as a grace to the Duke, it was resolved in the Council of Ten, that he should be allowed to dispose of two thousand ducats out of his own property. And it was resolved, that all the counsellors and all the Avogadori of the commonwealth, those of the Council of Ten, and the members of the junta who had assisted in passing sentence on the Duke

and the other traitors, should have the privilege of carrying arms both by day and by night in Venice, and from Grado to Cavazere. And they were also to be allowed two footmen carrying arms, the aforesaid footmen living and boarding with them in their own houses. And he who did not keep two footmen might transfer the privilege to his sons or his brothers; but only to two. Permission of carrying arms was also granted to the four Notaries of the Chancery, that is to say, of the Supreme Court, who took the depositions, and they were Amedio, Nicoletto di Lorino, Steffanello, and Pietro de Compostelli, the secretaries of the Signori di Notte.

After the traitors had been hanged, and the Duke had had his head cut off, the state remained in great tranquillity and peace. And, as I have read in a chronicle, the corpse of the Duke was removed in a barge, with eight torches, to his tomb in the church of San Giovanni e Paolo, where it was buried. The tomb is now in that aisle in the middle of the little church of Santa Maria della Pace, which was built by Bishop Gabriel of Bergamo. It is a coffin of stone, with these words engraved thereon: "*Heic jacet Dominus Marinus Faletro Dux.*"—And they did not paint his portrait in the hall of the Great Council:—But in the place where it ought to have been, you see these words:—"*Hic est locus Marini Faletro decapitati pro criminibus*"—and it is thought that his house was granted to the church of Sant' Apostolo; it was that great one near the bridge. Yet this could not be the case, or else the family bought it back from the church; for it still belongs to Cà Faliero. I must not refrain from noting, that some wished

to write the following words in the place where his portrait ought to have been, as aforesaid:—"*Marinus Faletro Dux, temeritas me cepit, pœnas lui, decapitatus pro criminibus.*"—Others, also, indited a couplet, worthy of being inscribed upon his tomb.

"*Dux Venetum jacet heic, patriam qui prodere tentans,*
"*Sceptra, decus, censum, perdidit, atque caput.*"

[I am obliged for this excellent translation of the old chronicle to Mr. F. Cohen, to whom the reader will find himself indebted for a version that I could not myself (though after many years' intercourse with Italian) have given by any means so purely and so faithfully.]

III.

"Al giovane Doge Andrea Dandolo succedette un vecchio, il quale tardi si pose al timone della repubblica, ma sempre prima di quel, che facea d' uopo a lui, ed alla patria: egli è Marino Faliero, personaggio a me noto per antica dimestichezza. Falsa era l' opinione intorno a lui, giacchè egli si mostrò fornito più di coraggio, che di senno. Non pago della prima dignità, entrò con sinistro piede nel pubblico Palazzo: imperciocchè questo Doge dei Veneti, magistrato sacro in tutti i secoli, che dagli antichi fu sempre venerato qual nume in quella città, l' altr' jeri fu decollato nel vestibolo dell' istesso Palazzo. Discorrerei fin dal principio le cause di un tale evento, se così vario, ed ambiguo non ne fosse il grido. Nessuno però lo scusa, tutti affermano, che egli abbia voluto cangiar qualche cosa nell' ordine della repubblica a lui tramandato dai maggiori. Che desiderava egli di più? Io son d' avviso, che egli abbia ottenuto ciò, che non si concedette a nessun altro: mentre adempiva gli uffici di legato presso il Pontefice, e sulle rive del Rodano trattava la pace, che io prima di lui avevo indarno tentato di conchiudere, gli fù conferito l' onore del Ducato, che nè chiedeva, nè s' aspettava. Tornato in patria, pensò a quello, cui nessuno non pose mente giammai, e soffrì quello che a niuno accadde mai di soffrire: giacchè in quel luogo celeberrimo, e chiarissimo, e bellissimo infra tutti quelli, che

io vidi, ove i suoi antenati avevano ricevuti grandissimi onori in mezzo alle pompe trionfali, ivi egli fu trascinato in modo servile, e spogliato delle insegne ducali, perdette la testa, e macchiò col proprio sangue le soglie del tempio, l' atrio del Palazzo, e le scale marmoree rendute spesse volte illustri o dalle solenni festività, o dalle ostili spoglie. Ho notato il luogo, ora noto il tempo · è l' anno del Natale di Cristo 1355, fù il giorno 18. d'Aprile. Sì alto è il grido sparso, che se alcuno esaminerà la disciplina, e le costumanze di quella città, e quanto mutamento di cose venga minacciato dalla morte di un sol uomo (quantunque molti altri, come narrano, essendo complici, o subirono l' istesso supplicio, o lo aspettano) si accorgerà, che nulla di più grande avvenne ai nostri tempi nell' Italia. Tu forse quì attendi il mio giudizio; assolvo il popolo, se credere alla fama, benchè abbia potuto e castigare più mitamente, e con maggior dolcezza vendicare il suo dolore: ma non così facilmente, si modera un' ira giusta insieme, e grande in un numeroso popolo principalmente, nel quale il precipitoso, ed instabile volgo aguzza gli stimoli dell' iracondia con rapidi, e sconsigliati clamori. Compatisco, e nell' istesso tempo mi adiro con quell' infelice uomo, il quale adorno di un' insolito onore, non so, che cosa si volesse negli estremi anni della sua vita. la calamità di lui diviene sempre più grave, perchè dalla sentenza contra di esso promulgata apparirà, che egli fu non solo misero, ma insano, e demente, e che con vane arti si usurpò per tanti anni una falsa fama di sapienza. Ammonisco i Dogi, i quali gli succederanno, che questo è un esempio posto innanzi ai loro occhi, quale specchio, nel quale veggano di essere non Signori, ma Duci, anzi

nemmeno Duci, ma onorati servi della Repubblica. Tu sta sano; e giacchè fluttuano le pubbliche cose, sforziamoci di governar modestissimamente i privati nostri affari."

Levati. Viaggi di Petrarca, vol. iv. p. 323.

The above Italian translation from the Latin epistles of Petrarch proves—

1stly, That Marino Faliero was a personal friend of Petrarch's: "antica dimestichezza," old intimacy, is the phrase of the poet.

2dly, That Petrarch thought that he had more courage than conduct, "più di *coraggio* che di senno."

3dly, That there was some jealousy on the part of Petrarch; for he says that Marino Faliero was treating of the peace which he himself had "vainly attempted to conclude."

4thly, That the honour of the Dukedom was conferred upon him, which he neither sought nor expected, "che nè chiedeva nè aspettava," and which had never been granted to any other in like circumstances, "ciò che non si concedette a nessun altro;" a proof of the high esteem in which he must have been held.

5thly, That he *had* a reputation for *wisdom, only* forfeited by the last enterprise of his life, "si usurpò per tanti anni una falsa fama di sapienza."—"He had usurped for so many years a false fame of wisdom;" rather a difficult task I should think. People are generally found out before eighty years of age, at least in a republic.

From these, and the other historical notes which I have collected, it may be inferred, that Marino Faliero

possessed many of the qualities, but not the success of a hero: and that his passions were too violent. The paltry and ignorant account of Dr. Moore falls to the ground. Petrarch says, "that there had been no greater event in his times" (*our times* literally), "nostri tempi," in Italy. He also differs from the historian in saying that Faliero was on the banks of the *Rhone*," instead of at Rome, when elected; the other accounts say, that the deputation of the Venetian senate met him at Ravenna. How this may have been, it is not for me to decide, and is of no great importance. Had the man succeeded, he would have changed the face of Venice, and perhaps of Italy. As it is, what *are* they both?

IV.

Extrait de l'Ouvrage—Histoire de la République de Venise, par P. Daru de l'Académie Française, tom. v, livre xxxv, p. 95, etc. Edition de Paris, MDCCCXIX.

" A CES attaques si fréquentes que le gouvernement dirigeait contre le clergé, à ces luttes établies entre les différens corps constitués, à ces entreprises de la masse de la noblesse contre les dépositaires du pouvoir, à toutes ces propositions d'innovation qui se terminaient toujours par des coups d'état ; il faut ajouter une autre cause non moins propre à propager le mépris des anciennes doctrines, *c'était l'excès de la corruption.*

" Cette liberté de mœurs, qu'on avait long-temps vantée comme le charme principal de la société de Venise, était devenue un désordre scandaleux ; le lien du mariage était moins sacré dans ce pays catholique que dans ceux où les lois civiles et religieuses permettent de le dissoudre. Faute de pouvoir rompre le contrat, on supposait qu'il n'avait jamais existé, et les moyens de nullité, allégués avec impudeur par les époux, étaient admis avec la même facilité par des magistrats et par des prêtres également corrompus. Ces divorces colorés d'un autre nom devinrent si fréquens, que l'acte le plus important de la société civile se trouva de la compétence d'un tribunal d'exception, et que ce fut à

la police de réprimer le scandale. Le conseil des dix ordonna, en 1782, que toute femme, qui intenterait une demande en dissolution de mariage, serait obligée d'en attendre le jugement dans un couvent que le tribunal désignerait.* Bientôt après il évoqua devant lui toutes les causes de cette nature.† Cet empiétement sur la jurisdiction ecclésiastique, ayant occasionné des réclamations de la part de la cour de Rome, le conseil se réserva le droit de débouter les époux de leur demande; et consentit à la renvoyer devant l'officialité, toutes les fois qu'il ne l'aurait pas rejetée.§

"Il y eut un moment, où sans doute le renversement des fortunes, la perte des jeunes gens, les discordes domestiques, déterminèrent le gouvernement à s'écarter des maximes qu'il s'était faites sur la liberté de mœurs qu'il permettait à ses sujets : on chassa de Venise toutes les courtisanes. Mais leur absence ne suffisait pas pour ramener aux bonnes mœurs toute une population élevée dans la plus honteuse licence. Le désordre pénétra dans l'intérieur des familles, dans les cloîtres ; et l'on se crut obligé de rappeler, d'indemniser** même des femmes, qui surprenaient quelquefois d'importans secrets, et qu'on pouvait employer utilement à ruiner des hommes que leur fortune aurait pu

* Correspondance de M. Schlick, chargé d'affaires de France, dépêche du 24 Aout, 1782.

† *Ibid.* Dépêche du 31 Aout.

§ *Ibid.* Dépêche du 3 Septembre, 1785.

** Le décret de rappel les désignait sous le nom de *nostre benemerite meretrici*. On leur assigna un fonds et des maisons appelées, *Case rampane*, d'où vient la dénomination injurieuse de *Carampane*.

rendre dangereux. Depuis, la licence est toujours allée croissant, et l'on a vu non-seulement des mères trafiquer de la virginité de leurs filles, mais la vendre par un contrat, dont l'authenticité était garantie par la signature d'un officier public, et l'exécution mise sous la protection des lois.*

"Les parloirs des couvents où étaient renfermées les filles nobles, les maisons des courtisanes, quoique la police y entretînt soigneusement un grand nombre de surveillans, étaient les seuls points de réunion de la société de Venise, et dans ces deux endroits si divers on était également libre. La musique, les collations, la galanterie, n'étaient pas plus interdites dans les parloirs que dans les casins. Il y avait un grand nombre de casins destinés aux réunions publiques, où le jeu était la principale occupation de la société. C'était un singulier spectacle de voir autour d'une table des personnes des deux sexes en masque, et de graves personnages en robe de magistrature, implorant le hasard, passant des angoisses du désespoir aux illusions de l'espérance, et cela sans proférer une parole.

"Les riches avaient des casins particuliers; mais ils y vivaient avec mystère; leurs femmes délaissées trouvaient un dédommagement dans la liberté dont elles jouissaient. La corruption des mœurs les avait privées de tout leur empire; on vient de parcourir toute l'histoire de Venise, et on ne les a pas vues une seule fois exercer la moindre influence."

* Mayer *Description de Venise*, tom. 2, et M. Archenholz, *Tableau de l'Italie*, tom. 1, chap. 2.

V.

Extract from the History of the Republic of Venice, by P. Daru, Member of the French Academy. vol. v, b. xxxv, p. 95, etc. Paris Edit. 1819

"To these attacks, so frequently pointed by the government against the clergy,—to the continual struggles between the different constituted bodies,—to these enterprises carried on by the mass of the nobles against the depositaries of power,—to all those projects of innovation, which always ended by a stroke of state policy,—we must add a cause not less fitted to spread contempt for ancient doctrines; *this was the excess of corruption.*

"That freedom of manners, which had been long boasted of as the principal charm of Venetian society, had degenerated into scandalous licentiousness, the tie of marriage was less sacred in that Catholic country, than among those nations where the laws and religion admit of its being dissolved. Because they could not break the contract, they feigned that it had not existed; and the ground of nullity, immodestly alledged by the married pair, was admitted with equal facility by priests and magistrates, alike corrupt. These divorces, veiled under another name, became so frequent, that the most important act of civil society was discovered to be amenable to a tribunal of exceptions; and to restrain the

open scandal of such proceedings became the office of the police. In 1782 the Council of Ten decreed, that every woman who should sue for a dissolution of her marriage should be compelled to await the decision of the judges in some convent, to be named by the court.* Soon afterwards the same council summoned all causes of that nature before itself.† This infringement on ecclesiastical jurisdiction having occasioned some remonstrance from Rome, the council retained only the right of rejecting the petition of the married persons, and consented to refer such causes to the holy office as it should not previously have rejected.§

"There was a moment in which, doubtless, the destruction of private fortunes, the ruin of youth, the domestic discord occasioned by these abuses, determined the government to depart from its established maxims concerning the freedom of manners allowed the subject. All the courtizans were banished from Venice, but their absence was not enough to reclaim and bring back good morals to a whole people brought up in the most scandalous licentiousness. Depravity reached the very bosoms of private families, and even into the cloister; and they found themselves obliged to recal, and even to indemnify** women who sometimes gained possession of im-

* Correspondence of M. Shlick, French chargé d'affaires. Despatch of 24th August, 1782.

† *Ibid.* Despatch, 31st August.

§ *Ibid.* Despatch, 3d September, 1785.

** The decree for their recal designates them as *nostre benemerite meretrici.* A fund and some houses called *Case rampane* were assigned to them; hence the opprobrious appellation of *Carampane.*

portant secrets. and who might be usefully employed in the ruin of men whose fortunes might have rendered them dangerous. Since that time licentiousness has gone on increasing, and we have seen mothers, not only selling the innocence of their daughters, but selling it by a contract, authenticated by the signature of a public officer, and the performance of which was secured by the protection of the laws.*

"The parlours of the convents of noble ladies. and the houses of the courtisans, though the police carefully kept up a number of spies about them, were the only assemblies for society in Venice; and in these two places, so different from each other, there was equal freedom Music, collations, gallantry, were not more forbidden in the parlours than at the casinos. There were a number of casinos for the purpose of public assemblies, where gaming was the principal pursuit of the company. It was a strange sight to see persons of either sex, masked, or grave personages in their magisterial robes, round a table, invoking chance, and giving way at one instant to the agonies of despair, at the next to the illusions of hope. and that without uttering a single word.

"The rich had private casinos, but they lived *incognito* in them; and the wives whom they abandoned found compensation in the liberty they enjoyed. The corruption of morals had deprived them of their empire We have just reviewed the whole history of Venice. and we have not once seen them exercise the slightest influence."

* Mayer, *Description of Venice*, vol. ii, and M. Archenholtz, *Picture of Italy*, vol. i ch. 2

From the present decay and degeneracy of Venice under the Barbarians, there are some honourable individual exceptions. There is Pasqualigo, the last, and, alas! *posthumous* son of the marriage of the Doges with the Adriatic, who fought his frigate with far greater gallantry than any of his French coadjutors in the memorable action off Lissa. I came home in the squadron with the prizes in 1811, and recollect to have heard Sir William Hoste, and the other officers engaged in that glorious conflict, speak in the highest terms of Pasqualigo's behaviour. There is the Abbate Morelli. There is Alvise Querini, who, after a long and honourable diplomatic career, finds some consolation for the wrongs of his country, in the pursuits of literature with his nephew, Vittor Benzon, the son of the celebrated beauty the heroine of "La Biondina in Gondoletta." There are the patrician poet Morosini, and the poet Lamberti, the author of the "Biondina," etc. and many other estimable productions; and not least in an Englishman's estimation, Madame Michelli, the translator of Shakespeare. There are the young Dandolo and the improvvisatore Carrer, and Giuseppe Albrizzi, the accomplished son of an accomplished mother. There is Aglietti, and, were there nothing else, there is the immortality of Canova. Cicognara, Mustoxithi, Bucati, etc. etc. I do not reckon, because the one is a Greek, and the others were born at least a hundred miles off, which, throughout Italy, constitutes, if not a *foreigner*, *at least* a *stranger* (*forestiere*).

VI.

Extrait de l'Ouvrage—Histoire Littéraire d'Italie, par P. L. Ginguené, tom. ix, chap. xxxvi, p. 144 Edition de Paris, MDCCCXIX.

"IL y a une prédiction fort singulière sur Venise. 'Si tu ne changes pas,' dit-il à cette république altière, 'ta liberté qui déjà s'enfuit, ne comptera pas un siècle après la millième année.'

"En faisant remonter l'époque de la liberté Vénitienne jusqu'à l'établissement du gouvernement sous lequel la république a fleuri, on trouvera que l'élection du premier Doge date de 697, et si l'on y ajoute un siècle après mille, c'est à dire onze cents ans, on trouvera encore que le sens de la prédiction est littéralement celui-ci. 'Ta liberté ne comptera pas jusqu'à l'an 1797.' Rappelez-vous maintenant que Venise a cessé d'être libre en l'an cinq de la république Française, ou en 1796; vous verrez qu'il n'y eut jamais de prédiction plus précise et plus ponctuellement suivie de l'effet. Vous noterez donc comme très-remarquables ces trois vers de l'Alamanni, adressés à Venise, que personne pourtant n'a remarqués:

'Se non cangi pensier, l'un secol solo
Non conterà sopra 'l millesimo anno
Tua libertà, che va fuggendo a volo.'

Bien des prophéties ont passé pour telles, et bien des gens ont été appelés prophètes à meilleur marché."

VII.

Extract from the Literary History of Italy, by P. L. Ginguené, vol. ix, p. 144. Paris Edit. 1819.

"THERE is one very singular prophecy concerning Venice 'If thou dost not change,' it says to that proud republic, 'thy liberty, which is already on the wing, will not reckon a century more than the thousandth year.'

"If we carry back the epocha of Venetian freedom to the establishment of the government under which the republic flourished, we shall find that the date of the election of the first Doge is 697; and if we add one century to a thousand, that is, eleven hundred years, we shall find the sense of the prediction to be literally this: 'Thy liberty will not last till 1797.' Recollect that Venice ceased to be free in the year 1796, the fifth year of the French republic, and you will perceive that there never was prediction more pointed, or more exactly followed by the event. You will, therefore, note as very remarkable the three lines of Alamanni, addressed to Venice, which, however, no one has pointed out:

> '*Se non cangi pensier, l'un secol solo*
> *Non conterà sopra 'l millesimo anno*
> *Tua libertà, che va fuggendo a volo.*'

Many prophecies have passed for such, and many men have been called prophets for much less."

If the Doge's prophecy seem remarkable, look to the above, made by Alamanni two hundred and seventy years ago

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THE author of "Sketches Descriptive of Italy" etc. one of the hundred tours lately published, is extremely anxious to disclaim a possible charge of plagiarism from "Childe Harold" and "Beppo." See p. 159, vol. iv He adds, that still less could this presumed coincidence arise from "my conversation," as he had *repeatedly declined an introduction to me while in Italy*.

Who this person may be I know not: but he must have been deceived by all or any of those who "repeatedly offered to introduce" him. as I have invariably refused to receive any English with whom I was not previously acquainted, even when they had letters from England. If the whole assertion is not an invention, I request this person not to sit down with the notion that he COULD have been introduced, since there has been nothing I have so carefully avoided as any kind of intercourse with his countrymen,—excepting the very few who were a considerable time resident in Venice, or had been of my previous acquaintance. Whoever made him any such offer was possessed of impudence equal to that of making such an assertion without having had it. The fact is, that I hold in utter abhorrence any contact with the travelling English. as my friend the Consul General Hoppner, and the Countess Benzoni (in whose house the Conversazione mostly frequented by them is held), could amply testify, were it worth while. I was persecuted by these tourists even to my riding ground at Lido, and reduced to the most disagreeable circuits to avoid them. At Madame

Benzoni's I repeatedly refused to be introduced to them,—of a thousand such presentations pressed upon me, I accepted two, and both were to Irish women.

I should hardly have descended to speak of such trifles publicly, if the impudence of this "sketcher" had not forced me to a refutation of a disingenuous and gratuitously impertinent assertion:—so meant to be, for what could it import to the reader to be told that the author "had repeatedly declined an introduction," even had it been true, which for the reasons I have above given, is scarcely possible. Except Lords Lansdown, Jersey, and Lauderdale; Messrs. Scott, Hammond, Sir Humphry Davy, the late M. Lewis, W. Bankes, Mr. Hoppner, Thomas Moore, Lord Kinnaird, his brother, Mr. Joy, and Mr. Hobhouse, I do not recollect to have exchanged a word with another Englishman since I left their country; and almost all these I had known before. The others,—and God knows there were some hundreds,—who bored me with letters or visits, I refused to have any communication with, and shall be proud and happy when that wish becomes mutual.

END OF VOL. IX.

THE

WORKS

OF

LORD BYRON.

PRINTED BY A. BELIN.

THE

WORKS

OF

LORD BYRON,

COMPREHENDING THE

SUPPRESSED POEMS.

EMBELLISHED WITH A PORTRAIT, AND A SKETCH OF HIS LIFE.

VOL. X.

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PREFACE.

In publishing the Tragedies of *Sardanapalus*, and of *The Two Foscari*, I have only to repeat that they were not composed with the most remote view to the stage.

On the attempt made by the Managers in a former instance, the public opinion has been already expressed.

With regard to my own private feelings, as it seems that they are to stand for nothing, I shall say nothing.

For the historical foundation of the compositions in question, the reader is referred to the Notes.

The Author has in one instance attempted to preserve, and in the other to approach the "unities;" conceiving that with any very distant departure from them, there may be poetry, but can be no drama. He is aware of the unpopu-

larity of this notion in present English literature, but it is not a system of his own, being merely an opinion, which, not very long ago, was the law of literature throughout the world, and is still so in the more civilized parts of it. But "Nous avons changé tout cela," and are reaping the advantages of the change. The writer is far from conceiving that any thing he can adduce by personal precept or example can at all approach his regular, or even irregular predecessors: he is merely giving a reason why he preferred the more regular formation of a structure, however feeble, to an entire abandonment of all rules whatsoever. Where he has failed, the failure is in the architect,—and not in the art.

SARDANAPALUS.

In this tragedy it has been my intention to follow the account of Diodorus Siculus, reducing it, however, to such dramatic regularity as I best could, and trying to approach the unities. I therefore suppose the rebellion to explode and succeed in one day by a sudden conspiracy instead of the long war of the history

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

Sardanapalus, *King of Nineveh and Assyria, etc.*

Arbaces, *the Mede who aspired to the Throne.*

Beleses, *a Chaldean and Soothsayer.*

Salemenes, *the King's Brother-in-law.*

Altada, *an Assyrian Officer of the Palace.*

Pania.

Zames.

Sfero.

Balea.

WOMEN.

Zarina, *the Queen.*

Myrrha, *an Ionian female Slave, and the Favourite of Sardanapalus.*

Women composing the Harem of Sardanapalus, Guards, Attendants, Chaldean Priests, Medes, etc. etc.

Scene—a Hall in the Royal Palace of Nineveh.

SARDANAPALUS.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

A Hall in the Palace.

SALEMENES (*solus*).

He hath wrong'd his queen, but still he is her lord;
He hath wrong'd my sister, still he is my brother;
He hath wrong'd his people, still he is their sovereign,
And I must be his friend as well as subject:
He must not perish thus. I will not see
The blood of Nimrod and Semiramis
Sink in the earth, and thirteen hundred years
Of empire ending like a shepherd's tale;
He must be roused. In his effeminate heart
There is a careless courage which corruption
Has not all quench'd, and latent energies,
Represt by circumstance, but not destroy'd—

Steep'd, but not drown'd, in deep voluptuousness.
If born a peasant, he had been a man
To have reach'd an empire; to an empire born,
He will bequeath none; nothing but a name,
Which his sons will not prize in heritage:—
Yet, not all lost, even yet he may redeem
His sloth and shame, by only being that
Which he should be, as easily as the thing
He should not be and is. Were it less toil
To sway his nations than consume his life?
To head an army than to rule a harem?
He sweats in palling pleasures, dulls his soul,
And saps his goodly strength, in toils which yield
not
Health like the chase, nor glory like the war—
He must be roused. Alas! there is no sound
[*Sound of soft music heard from within*
To rouse him short of thunder. Hark! the lute,
The lyre, the timbrel; the lascivious tinklings
Of lulling instruments, the softening voices
Of women, and of beings less than women,
Must chime in to the echo of his revel,
While the great king of all we know of earth
Lolls crown'd with roses, and his diadem

Lies negligently by to be caught up
By the first manly hand which dares to snatch it
Lo, where they come! already I perceive
The reeking odours of the perfumed trains,
And see the bright gems of the glittering girls,
Who are his comrades and his council, flash
Along the gallery, and amidst the damsels,
As femininely garb'd, and scarce less female,
The grandson of Semiramis, the man-queen.—
He comes! Shall I await him? yes, and front him,
And tell him what all good men tell each other,
Speaking of him and his. They come, the slaves,
Led by the monarch subject to his slaves

SCENE II.

Enter SARDANAPALUS *effeminately dressed, his Head crowned with Flowers, and his Robe negligently flowing, attended by a Train of Women and young Slaves.*

SARDANAPALUS (*speaking to some of his attendants*).
Let the pavilion over the Euphrates
Be garlanded, and lit, and furnish'd forth

For an especial banquet; at the hour
Of midnight we will sup there: see nought wanting,
And bid the galley be prepared. There is
A cooling breeze which crisps the broad clear river:
We will embark anon. Fair nymphs, who deign
To share the soft hours of Sardanapalus,
We'll meet again in that the sweetest hour,
When we shall gather like the stars above us,
And you will form a heaven as bright as theirs
Till then, let each be mistress of her time,
And thou, my own Ionian Myrrha, choose.
Wilt thou along with them or me?

MYRRHA

My lord——

SARDANAPALUS.

My lord, my life! why answerest thou so coldly?
It is the curse of kings to be so answered.
Rule thy own hours, thou rulest mine—say, wouldst thou
Accompany our guests, or charm away
The moments from me?

MYRRHA.

The king's choice is mine.

SARDANAPALUS.

I pray thee say not so: my chiefest joy
Is to contribute to thine every wish.
I do not dare to breathe my own desire,
Lest it should clash with thine; for thou art still
Too prompt to sacrifice thy thoughts for others.

MYRRHA.

I would remain: I have no happiness
Save in beholding thine; yet——

SARDANAPALUS.

Yet! what YET!
Thy own sweet will shall be the only barrier
Which ever rises betwixt thee and me.

MYRRHA.

I think the present is the wonted hour
Of council; it were better I retire.

SALEMENES (*comes forward and says*).

The Ionian slave says well, let her retire.

SARDANAPALUS.

Who answers! How now, brother?

SALEMENES.

The *queen's* brother,
And your most faithful vassal, royal lord.

SARDANAPALUS (*addressing his train*).

As I have said, let all dispose their hours
Till midnight, when again we pray your presence.
[*The court retiring.*
(*To* MYRRHA, *who is going.*) Myrrha! I thought
thou wouldst remain.

MYRRHA.

Great king,
Thou didst not say so

SARDANAPALUS

But *thou* lookedst it,
I know each glance of those Ionic eyes,
Which said thou wouldst not leave me

MYRRHA.

Sire! your brother——

SALEMENES.

His *consort's* brother, minion of Ionia!
How darest *thou* name *me* and not blush?

SARDANAPALUS.

Not blush!
Thou hast no more eyes than heart to make her
crimson
Like to the dying day on Caucasus,
Where sunset tints the snow with rosy shadows,

And then reproach her with thine own cold blind-
ness,
Which will not see it. What, in tears, my
Myrrha?

SALEMENES.

Let them flow on; she weeps for more than one,
And is herself the cause of bitterer tears.

SARDANAPALUS.

Cursed be he who caused those tears to flow!

SALEMENES.

Curse not thyself—millions do that already.

SARDANAPALUS.

Thou dost forget thee: make me not remember
I am a monarch.

SALEMENES.

Would thou couldst!

MYRRHA.

My sovereign,
I pray, and thou too, prince, permit my absence.

SARDANAPALUS.

Since it must be so, and this churl has check'd
Thy gentle spirit, go; but recollect
That we must forthwith meet: I had rather lose
An empire than thy presence.

[*Exit* MYRRHA.]

SALEMENES.

It may be.
Thou wilt lose both, and both for ever!

SARDANAPALUS.

Brother.
I can at least command myself, who listen
To language such as this; yet urge me not
Beyond my easy nature.

SALEMENES.

'Tis beyond
That easy, far too easy, idle nature,
Which I would urge thee. Oh that I could rouse
thee!
Though 'twere against myself.

SARDANAPALUS.

By the god Baal!
The man would make me tyrant.

SALEMENES.

So thou art.
Think'st thou there is no tyranny but that
Of blood and chains? The despotism of vice—
The weakness and the wickedness of luxury—
The negligence—the apathy—the evils
Of sensual sloth—produce ten thousand tyrants,
Whose delegated cruelty surpasses

The worst acts of one energetic master,
However harsh and hard in his own bearing.
The false and fond examples of thy lusts
Corrupt no less than they oppress, and sap
In the same moment all thy pageant power
And those who should sustain it; so that whether
A foreign foe invade, or civil broil
Distract within, both will alike prove fatal:
The first thy subjects have no heart to conquer,
The last they rather would assist than vanquish.

SARDANAPALUS.

Why what makes thee the mouth-piece of the
people?

SALEMENES.

Forgiveness of the queen, my sister's wrongs,
A natural love unto my infant nephews;
Faith to the king, a faith he may need shortly,
In more than words; respect for Nimrod's line;
Also, another thing thou knowest not.

SARDANAPALUS.

What's that?

SALEMENES.

To thee an unknown word.

SARDANAPALUS.

Yet speak it,
I love to learn.

SALEMENES.

Virtue.

SARDANAPALUS.

Not know the word!
Never was word yet rung so in my ears—
Worse than the rabble's shout, or splitting trumpet;
I've heard thy sister talk of nothing else.

SALEMENES.

To change the irksome theme, then, hear of vice

SARDANAPALUS.

From whom?

SALEMENES.

Even from the winds, if thou couldst listen
Unto the echoes of the nation's voice.

SARDANAPALUS.

Come, I'm indulgent as thou knowest, patient
As thou hast often proved—speak out, what moves
thee?

SALEMENES.

Thy peril.

SARDANAPALUS.

Say on.

SALEMENES.

Thus, then: all the nations,
For they are many, whom thy father left
In heritage, are loud in wrath against thee.

SARDANAPALUS.

'Gainst *me!* What would the slaves?

SALEMENES.

A king

SARDANAPALUS.

And what
Am I then?

SALEMENES.

In their eyes a nothing; but
In mine a man who might be something still.

SARDANAPALUS.

The railing drunkards! why, what would they have?
Have they not peace and plenty?

SALEMENES.

Of the first,
More than is glorious; of the last far less
Than the king recks of.

SARDANAPALUS.

Whose then is the crime,
But the false satraps, who provide no better?

SALEMENES.

And somewhat in the monarch who ne'er looks
Beyond his palace walls, or if he stirs
Beyond them, 'tis but to some mountain palace,
Till summer heats wear down. O glorious Baal!
Who built up this vast empire, and wert made
A god, or at the least shinest like a god
Through the long centuries of thy renown,
This, thy presumed descendant, ne'er beheld
As king the kingdoms thou didst leave as hero,
Won with thy blood, and toil, and time, and peril!
For what? to furnish imposts for a revel,
Or multiplied extortions for a minion.

SARDANAPALUS.

I understand thee—thou wouldst have me go
Forth as a conqueror. By all the stars
Which the Chaldeans read! the restless slaves
Deserve that I should curse them with their wishes,
And lead them forth to glory.

SALEMENES.

Wherefore not?

Semiramis—a woman only—led
These our Assyrians to the solar shores
Of Ganges.

SARDANAPALUS.

'Tis most true. And *how* return'd?

SALEMENES.

Why, like a *man*—a hero; baffled, but
Not vanquish'd. With but twenty guards, she made
Good her retreat to Bactria.

SARDANAPALUS.

And how many
Left she behind in India to the vultures?

SALEMENES.

Our annals say not.

SARDANAPALUS.

Then I will say for them—
That she had better woven within her palace
Some twenty garments, than with twenty guards
Have fled to Bactria, leaving to the ravens,
And wolves, and men—the fiercer of the three,
Her myriads of fond subjects. Is *this* glory?
Then let me live in ignominy ever.

SALEMENES.

All warlike spirits have not the same fate

Semiramis, the glorious parent of
A hundred kings, although she fail'd in India,
Brought Persia, Media, Bactria, to the realm
Which she once sway'd—and thou *mightst* sway.

SARDANAPALUS

I *sway* them—
She but subdued them.

SALEMENES.

It may be ere long
That they will need her sword more than your sceptre

SARDANAPALUS.

There was a certain Bacchus, was there not?
I've heard my Greek girls speak of such—they say
He was a god, that is, a Grecian god,
An idol foreign to Assyria's worship,
Who conquer'd this same golden realm of Ind
Thou pratest of, where Semiramis was vanquish'd.

SALEMENES.

I have heard of such a man; and thou perceiv'st
That he is deem'd a god for what he did.

SARDANAPALUS.

And in his godship I will honour him—
Not much as man. What, ho! my cupbearer!

SALEMENES.

What means the king?

SARDANAPALUS

To worship your new god
And ancient conqueror. Some wine, I say

Enter Cupbearer.

SARDANAPALUS (*addressing the Cupbearer*).

Bring me the golden goblet thick with gems,
Which bears the name of Nimrod's chalice. Hence,
Fill full, and bear it quickly. [*Exit Cupbearer.*

SALEMENES.

Is this moment
A fitting one for the resumption of
Thy yet unslept-off revels?

Re-enter Cupbearer, with wine.

SARDANAPALUS (*taking the cup from him*).

Noble kinsman,
If these barbarian Greeks of the far shores
And skirts of these our realms lie not, this Bacchus
Conquer'd the whole of India, did he not?

SALEMENES.

He did, and thence was deem'd a deity.

SARDANAPALUS.

Not so:—of all his conquests a few columns,
Which may be his, and might be mine, if I
Thought them worth purchase and conveyance, are
The landmarks of the seas of gore he shed,
The realms he wasted, and the hearts he broke.
But here, here in this goblet is his title
To immortality—the immortal grape
From which he first express'd the soul, and gave
To gladden that of man, as some atonement
For the victorious mischiefs he had done.
Had it not been for this, he would have been
A mortal still in name as in his grave,
And, like my ancestor Semiramis,
A sort of semi-glorious human monster.
Here's that which deified him—let it now
Humanize thee; my surly, chiding brother,
Pledge me to the Greek god!

SALEMENES.

For all thy realms
I would not so blaspheme our country's creed

SARDANAPALUS.

That is to say, thou thinkest him a hero,
That he shed blood by oceans; and no god,

Because he turn'd a fruit to an enchantment,
Which cheers the sad, revives the old, inspires
The young, makes Weariness forget his toil,
And Fear her danger; opens a new world
When this, the present, palls. Well, then, *I* pledge
thee
And *him* as a true man, who did his utmost
In good or evil to surprise mankind. [*Drinks*.

SALEMENES.

Wilt thou resume a revel at this hour?

SARDANAPALUS.

And if I did, 'twere better than a trophy,
Being bought without a tear. But that is not
My present purpose: since thou wilt not pledge me,
Continue what thou pleasest.
(*To the Cupbearer*) Boy, retire.
Exit Cupbearer.

SALEMENES.

I would but have recall'd thee from thy dream:
Better by me awaken'd than rebellion.

SARDANAPALUS.

Who should rebel? or why? what cause? pretext?
I am the lawful king, descended from
A race of kings who knew no predecessors.

What have I done to thee, or to the people,
That thou shouldst rail, or they rise up against me?

SALEMENES.

Of what thou hast done to me, I speak not.

SARDANAPALUS.

But
Thou think'st that I have wrong'd the queen: is't not so?

SALEMENES.

Think! Thou hast wrong'd her!

SARDANAPALUS.

Patience, prince, and hear me.
She has all power and splendour of her station,
Respect, the tutelage of Assyria's heirs,
The homage and the appanage of sovereignty.
I married her as monarchs wed—for state,
And loved her as most husbands love their wives.
If she or thou supposedst I could link me
Like a Chaldean peasant to his mate,
Ye knew nor me, nor monarchs, nor mankind.

SALEMENES.

I pray thee, change the theme; my blood disdains
Complaint, and Salemenes' sister seeks not
Reluctant love even from Assyria's lord!

Nor would she deign to accept divided passion
With foreign strumpets and Ionian slaves.
The queen is silent.

SARDANAPALUS.

And why not her brother?

SALEMENES.

I only echo thee the voice of empires,
Which he who long neglects not long will govern.

SARDANAPALUS.

The ungrateful and ungracious slaves! they murmur
Because I have not shed their blood, nor led them
To dry into the desert's dust by myriads,
Or whiten with their bones the banks of Ganges;
Nor decimated them with savage laws,
Nor sweated them to build up pyramids,
Or Babylonian walls.

SALEMENES.

Yet these are trophies
More worthy of a people and their prince
Than songs, and lutes, and feasts, and concubines,
And lavish'd treasures, and contemned virtues.

SARDANAPALUS.

Or for my trophies I have founded cities:
There's Tarsus and Anchialus, both built

In one day—what could that blood-loving beldame,
My martial grandam, chaste Semiramis,
Do more, except destroy them?

SALEMENES.

'Tis most true;
I own thy merit in those founded cities,
Built for a whim, recorded with a verse
Which shames both them and thee to coming ages.

SARDANAPALUS.

Shame me! By Baal, the cities, though well built,
Are not more goodly than the verse! Say what
Thou wilt 'gainst me, my mode of life or rule,
But nothing 'gainst the truth of that brief record.
Why, those few lines contain the history
Of all things human; hear—" Sardanapalus
" The king, and son of Anacyndaraxes,
" In one day built Anchialus and Tarsus.
" Eat, drink, and love; the rest's not worth a
" fillip."

SALEMENES.

A worthy moral, and a wise inscription,
For a king to put up before his subjects!

SARDANAPALUS.

Oh, thou wouldst have me doubtless set up edicts—

"Obey the king—contribute to his treasure—
"Recruit his phalanx—spill your blood at bid-
"ding—
"Fall down and worship, or get up and toil."
Or thus—"Sardanapalus on this spot
"Slew fifty thousand of his enemies.
"These are their sepulchres, and this his trophy.'
I leave such things to conquerors; enough
For me, if I can make my subjects feel
The weight of human misery less, and glide
Ungroaning to the tomb; I take no licence
Which I deny to them. We all are men.

SALEMENES.

Thy sires have been revered as gods——

SARDANAPALUS.

In dust
And death, where they are neither gods nor men.
Talk not of such to me! the worms are gods;
At least they banqueted upon your gods,
And died for lack of further nutriment.
Those gods were merely men; look to their issue—
I feel a thousand mortal things about me,
But nothing godlike, unless it may be
The thing which you condemn, a disposition

To love and to be merciful, to pardon
The follies of my species, and (that's human)
To be indulgent to my own.

SALEMENES.

Alas!
The doom of Nineveh is seal'd.—Woe—woe
To the unrivall'd city!

SARDANAPALUS.

What dost dread?

SALEMENES.

Thou art guarded by thy foes: in a few hours
The tempest may break out which overwhelms
thee,
And thine and mine; and in another day
What *is* shall be the past of Belus' race.

SARDANAPALUS.

What must we dread?

SALEMENES.

Ambitious treachery,
Which has environ'd thee with snares; but yet
There is resource: empower me with thy sig .
To quell the machinations, and I lay
The heads of thy chief foes before thy feet.

SARDANAPALUS.

The heads—how many?

SALEMENES.

Must I stay to number
When even thine own's in peril? Let me go,
Give me thy signet—trust me with the rest.

SARDANAPALUS.

I will trust no man with unlimited lives.
When we take those from others, we nor know
What we have taken, nor the thing we give

SALEMENES.

Wouldst thou not take their lives who seek for
thine?

SARDANAPALUS.

That's a hard question.—But, I answer Yes.
Cannot the thing be done without? Who are they
hom thou suspectest?—Let them be arrested.

SALEMENES.

I would thou wouldst not ask me, the next
moment
Will send my answer through thy babbling troop
Of paramours, and thence fly o'er the palace,
Even to the city, and so baffle all.—
Trust me.

SARDANAPALUS.

Thou knowest I have done so ever,
Take thou the signet. [*Gives the Signet.*

SALEMENES.

I have one more request —

SARDANAPALUS.

Name it

SALEMENES.

That thou this night forbear the banquet
In the pavilion over the Euphrates.

SARDANAPALUS.

Forbear the banquet! Not for all the plotters
That ever shook a kingdom! Let them come,
And do their worst: I shall not blench for them
Nor rise the sooner; nor forbear the goblet;
Nor crown me with a single rose the less;
Nor lose one joyous hour.—I fear them not

SALEMENES.

But thou wouldst arm thee, wouldst thou not, if
needful?

SARDANAPALUS.

Perhaps. I have the goodliest armour, and
A sword of such a temper; and a bow
And javelin, which might furnish Nimrod forth:

A little heavy, but yet not unwieldy.
And now I think on't, 'tis long since I've used
them,
Even in the chase. Hast ever seen them, brother?

SALEMENES.

Is this a time for such fantastic trifling?—
If need be, wilt thou wear them?

SARDANAPALUS.

Will I not?—
Oh! if it must be so, and these rash slaves
Will not be ruled with less, I'll use the sword
Till they shall wish it turn'd into a distaff.

SALEMENES.

They say, thy sceptre's turn'd to that already.

SARDANAPALUS.

That's false! but let them say so: the old Greeks,
Of whom our captives often sing, related
The same of their chief hero, Hercules,
Because he loved a Lydian queen: thou seest
The populace of all the nations seize
Each calumny they can to sink their sovereigns.

SALEMENES.

They did not speak thus of thy fathers.

SARDANAPALUS.

No,

They dared not. They were kept to toil and
combat,
And never changed their chains but for their armour:
Now they have peace and pastime, and the licence
To revel and to rail; it irks me not.
I would not give the smile of one fair girl
For all the popular breath that e'er divided
A name from nothing. What are the rank tongues
Of this vile herd, grown insolent with feeding,
That I should prize their noisy praise, or dread
Their noisome clamour?

SALEMENES.

You have said they are men;
As such their hearts are something.

SARDANAPALUS.

So my dogs' are;
And better, as more faithful:—but, proceed;
Thou hast my signet:—since they are tumultuous,
Let them be temper'd; yet not roughly, till
Necessity enforce it. I hate all pain,
Given or received; we have enough within us,
The meanest vassal as the loftiest monarch,
Not to add to each other's natural burthen

Of mortal misery, but rather lessen,
By mild reciprocal alleviation,
The fatal penalties imposed on life;
But this they know not, or they will not know.
I have, by Baal! done all I could to soothe them:
I made no wars, I added no new imposts,
I interfered not with their civic lives,
I let them pass their days as best might suit them,
Passing my own as suited me.

SALEMENES.

Thou stopp'st
Short of the duties of a king; and therefore
They say thou art unfit to be a monarch.

SARDANAPALUS.

They lie.—Unhappily, I am unfit
To be aught save a monarch, else for me,
The meanest Mede might be the king instead.

SALEMENES.

There is one Mede, at least, who seeks to be so.

SARDANAPALUS.

What mean'st thou?—'tis thy secret; thou desirest
Few questions, and I'm not of curious nature.
Take the fit steps; and since necessity
Requires, I sanction and support thee. Ne'er

Was man who more desired to rule in peace
The peaceful only; if they rouse me, better
They had conjured up stern Nimrod from his ashes,
"The mighty hunter." I will turn these realms
To one wide desert chase of brutes, who *were*,
But *would* no more, by their own choice, be
human.
What they have found me, they belie; *that which*
They yet may find me—shall defy their wish
To speak it worse; and let them thank themselves.

SALEMENES.

Then thou at last canst feel?

SARDANAPALUS.

Feel! who feels not
Ingratitude?

SALEMENES.

I will not pause to answer
With words, but deeds. Keep thou awake that
energy
Which sleeps at times, but is not dead within thee,
And thou mayst yet be glorious in thy reign,
As powerful in thy realm. Farewell!

[*Exit* SALEMENES

SARDANAPALUS (*solus*).

Farewell!
He's gone; and on his finger bears my signet,
Which is to him a sceptre. He is stern
As I am heedless; and the slaves deserve
To feel a master. What may be the danger,
I know not:—he hath found it, let him quell it.
Must I consume my life—this little life—
In guarding against all may make it less?
It is not worth so much! It were to die
Before my hour, to live in dread of death,
Tracing revolt: suspecting all about me,
Because they are near; and all who are remote,
Because they are far. But if it should be so—
If they should sweep me off from earth and empire,
Why, what is earth or empire of the earth?
I have loved, and lived, and multiplied my image;
To die is no less natural than those—
Acts of this clay! 'Tis true I have not shed
Blood, as I might have done, in oceans, till
My name became the synonyme of death—
A terror and a trophy. But for this
I feel no penitence; my life is love:
If I must shed blood, it shall be by force.

Till now no drop from an Assyrian vein
Hath flow'd for me, nor hath the smallest coin
Of Nineveh's vast treasures e'er been lavish'd
On objects which could cost her sons a tear:
If then they hate me, 'tis because I hate not;
If they rebel, it is because I oppress not.
Oh, men! ye must be ruled with scythes, not sceptres,
And mow'd down like the grass, else all we reap
Is rank abundance, and a rotten harvest
Of discontents infecting the fair soil,
Making a desert of fertility.—
I'll think no more.——Within there, ho!

Enter an ATTENDANT.

SARDANAPALUS.

Slave, tell
The Ionian Myrrha we would crave her presence.

ATTENDANT.

King, she is here.

MYRRHA *enters*.

SARDANAPALUS (*apart to Attendant*).

Away!
(*Addressing* MYRRHA.) Beautiful being!
Thou dost almost anticipate my heart;

It throbbed for thee, and here thou comest: let me
Deem that some unknown influence, some sweet
oracle,
Communicates between us, though unseen,
In absence, and attracts us to each other.

MYRRHA.

There doth.

SARDANAPALUS.

I know there doth, but not its name;
What is it?

MYRRHA.

In my native land a God,
And in my heart a feeling like a God's,
Exalted; yet I own 'tis only mortal,
For what I feel is humble, and yet happy—
That is, it would be happy; but——

[MYRRHA *pauses.*

SARDANAPALUS.

There comes
For ever something between us and what
We deem our happiness: let me remove
The barrier which that hesitating accent
Proclaims to thine, and mine is seal'd.

MYRRHA.

My lord!—

SARDANAPALUS.

My lord—my king—sire—sovereign! thus it is—
For ever thus, address'd with awe. I ne'er
Can see a smile, unless in some broad banquet's
Intoxicating glare, when the buffoons
Have gorged themselves up to equality,
Or I have quaff'd me down to their abasement.
Myrrha, I can hear all these things, these names,
Lord—king—sire—monarch—nay, time was I prized them,
That is, I suffer'd them—from slaves and nobles;
But when they falter from the lips I love,
The lips which have been press'd to mine, a chill
Comes o'er my heart, a cold sense of the falsehood
Of this my station, which represses feeling
In those for whom I have felt most, and makes me
Wish that I could lay down the dull tiara,
And share a cottage on the Caucasus
With thee, and wear no crowns but those of flowers.

MYRRHA.

Would that we could!

SARDANAPALUS.

And dost *thou* feel this?—Why?

MYRRHA.

Then thou wouldst know what thou canst never
know.

SARDANAPALUS.

And that is——

MYRRHA.

The true value of a heart,
At least a woman's.

SARDANAPALUS.

I have proved a thousand—
A thousand, and a thousand.

MYRRHA.

Hearts?

SARDANAPALUS.

I think so.

MYRRHA.

Not one! the time may come thou may'st.

SARDANAPALUS.

It will.
Hear, Myrrha, Salemenes has declared—

Or why or how he hath divined it, Belus,
Who founded our great realm, knows more than
I—
But Salemenes hath declared my throne
In peril.

MYRRHA.

He did well.

SARDANAPALUS.

And say'st *thou* so?
Thou whom he spurn'd so harshly, and now dared
Drive from our presence with his savage jeers,
And made thee weep and blush?

MYRRHA.

I should do both
More frequently, and he did well to call me
Back to my duty. But thou speakest of peril—
Peril to thee——

SARDANAPALUS.

Ay, from dark plots and snares
From Medes—and discontented troops and nations.
I know not what—a labyrinth of things—
A maze of mutter'd threats and mysteries:
Thou know'st the man—it is his usual custom.

But he is honest. Come, we'll think no more
on't—
But of the midnight festival.

MYRRHA.

'Tis time
To think of aught save festivals. Thou hast not
Spurn'd his sage cautions?

SARDANAPALUS.

What!—and dost thou fear?

MYRRHA.

Fear!—I'm a Greek, and how should I fear death?
A slave, and wherefore should I dread my free-
dom?

SARDANAPALUS.

Then wherefore dost thou turn so pale?

MYRRHA.

I love.

SARDANAPALUS.

And do not I? I love thee far—far more
Than either the brief life or the wide realm,
Which, it may be, are menaced;—yet I blench not.

MYRRHA.

That means thou lovest nor thyself nor me;
For he who loves another loves himself,

Even for that other's sake. This is too rash:
Kingdoms and lives are not to be so lost.

SARDANAPALUS.

Lost!—why, who is the aspiring chief who dared
Assume to win them?

MYRRHA.

Who is he should dread
To try so much? When he who is their ruler
Forgets himself, will they remember him?

SARDANAPALUS.

Myrrha!

MYRRHA.

Frown not upon me: you have smiled
Too often on me not to make those frowns
Bitterer to bear than any punishment
Which they may augur.—King, I am your subject!
Master, I am your slave! Man, I have loved you!—
Loved you, I know not by what fatal weakness,
Although a Greek, and born a foe to monarchs—
A slave, and hating fetters—an Ionian,
And, therefore, when I love a stranger, more
Degraded by that passion than by chains!
Still I have loved you. If that love were strong

Enough to overcome all former nature,
Shall it not claim the privilege to save you?

SARDANAPALUS.

Save me, my beauty! Thou art very fair,
And what I seek of thee is love—not safety

MYRRHA.

And without love where dwells security?

SARDANAPALUS.

I speak of woman's love.

MYRRHA.

The very first
Of human life must spring from woman's breast,
Your first small words are taught you from her lips,
Your first tears quench'd by her, and your last sighs
Too often breathed out in a woman's hearing,
When men have shrunk from the ignoble care
Of watching the last hour of him who led them.

SARDANAPALUS.

My eloquent Ionian! thou speak'st music,
The very chorus of the tragic song
I have heard thee talk of as the favourite pastime
Of thy far father-land. Nay, weep not—calm thee.

MYRRHA.

I weep not.—But I pray thee, do not speak
About my fathers or their land.

SARDANAPALUS.

Yet oft
Thou speakest of them.

MYRRHA.

True—true: constant thought
Will overflow in words unconsciously;
But when another speaks of Greece, it wounds me.

SARDANAPALUS.

Well, then, how wouldst thou *save* me, as thou saidst?

MYRRHA.

By teaching thee to save thyself, and not
Thyself alone, but these vast realms, from all
The rage of the worst war—the war of brethren.

SARDANAPALUS.

Why, child, I loathe all war, and warriors;
I live in peace and pleasure: what can man
Do more?

MYRRHA.

Alas! my lord, with common men
There needs too oft the show of war to keep

The substance of sweet peace; and for a king,
'Tis sometimes better to be fear'd than loved.

SARDANAPALUS.

And I have never sought but for the last.

MYRRHA.

And now art neither.

SARDANAPALUS.

Dost *thou* say so, Myrrha?

MYRRHA.

I speak of civic popular love, *self* love,
Which means that men are kept in awe and law,
Yet not oppress'd—at least they must not think so;
Or if they think so, deem it necessary,
To ward off worse oppression, their own passions.
A king of feasts, and flowers, and wine, and revel,
And love, and mirth, was never king of glory.

SARDANAPALUS.

Glory! what's that?

MYRRHA.

Ask of the gods thy fathers.

SARDANAPALUS.

They cannot answer; when the priests speak for them,
'Tis for some small addition to the temple.

MYRRHA.

Look to the annals of thine empire's founders.

SARDANAPALUS.

They are so blotted o'er with blood, I cannot.
But what wouldst have? the empire *has been*
founded.
I cannot go on multiplying empires.

MYRRHA.

Preserve thine own.

SARDANAPALUS.

At least I will enjoy it.
Come, Myrrha, let us on to the Euphrates;
The hour invites, the galley is prepared,
And the pavilion, deck'd for our return,
In fit adornment for the evening banquet,
Shall blaze with beauty and with light, until
It seems unto the stars which are above us
Itself an opposite star; and we will sit
Crown'd with fresh flowers like——

MYRRHA.

Victims.

SARDANAPALUS.

No, like sovereigns,
The shepherd kings of patriarchal times,

Who knew no brighter gems than summer wreaths,
And none but tearless triumphs. Let us on.

Enter PANIA.

PANIA.

May the king live for ever!

SARDANAPALUS.

Not an hour
Longer than he can love. How my soul hates
This language, which makes life itself a lie,
Flattering dust with eternity. Well, Pania!
Be brief.

PANIA.

I am charged by Salemenes to
Reiterate his prayer unto the king,
That for this day, at least, he will not quit
The palace: when the general returns,
He will adduce such reasons as will warrant
His daring, and perhaps obtain the pardon
Of his presumption.

SARDANAPALUS.

What! am I then coop'd?
Already captive? can I not even breathe
The breath of heaven? Tell prince Salemenes,

Were all Assyria raging round the walls
In mutinous myriads, I would still go forth.

PANIA.

I must obey, and yet—

MYRRHA.

Oh, monarch, listen.—
How many a day and moon thou hast reclined
Within these palace walls in silken dalliance,
And never shown thee to thy people's longing,
Leaving thy subjects' eyes ungratified,
The satraps uncontroll'd, the gods unworshipp'd,
And all things in the anarchy of sloth,
'Till all, save evil, slumber'd through the realm!
And wilt thou not now tarry for a day,
A day which may redeem thee? Wilt thou not
Yield to the few still faithful a few hours,
For them, for thee, for thy past fathers' race,
And for thy sons' inheritance?

PANIA.

'Tis true!
From the deep urgency with which the prince
Dispatch'd me to your sacred presence, I
Must dare to add my feeble voice to that
Which now has spoken.

SARDANAPALUS.

No, it must not be.

MYRRHA.

For the sake of thy realm!

SARDANAPALUS.

Away!

PANIA.

For that
Of all thy faithful subjects, who will rally
Round thee and thine.

SARDANAPALUS.

These are mere phantasies;
There is no peril:—'tis a sullen scheme
Of Salemenes, to approve his zeal,
And show himself more necessary to us.

MYRRHA.

By all that's good and glorious, take this counsel.

SARDANAPALUS.

Business to-morrow.

MYRRHA.

Ay, or death to-night.

SARDANAPALUS.

Why, let it come, then, unexpectedly,
'Midst joy and gentleness, and mirth and love;

So let me fall like the pluck'd rose!—far better
Thus than be wither'd.

MYRRHA.

Then thou wilt not yield,
Even for the sake of all that ever stirr'd
A monarch into action, to forego
A trifling revel.

SARDANAPALUS.

No.

MYRRHA.

Then yield for *mine*;
For my sake!

SARDANAPALUS.

Thine, my Myrrha?

MYRRHA.

'Tis the first
Boon which I e'er ask'd Assyria's king.

SARDANAPALUS.

That's true; and, wer't my kingdom, must be granted.
Well, for thy sake, I yield me. Pania, hence!
Thou hear'st me.

PANIA.

And obey. [*Exit* PANIA.

SARDANAPALUS.

I marvel at thee.
What is thy motive, Myrrha, thus to urge me?

MYRRHA.

Thy safety; and the certainty that nought
Could urge the prince, thy kinsman, to require
Thus much from thee, but some impending danger.

SARDANAPALUS.

And if I do not dread it, why shouldst thou?

MYRRHA.

Because *thou* dost not fear, I fear for *thee*.

SARDANAPALUS.

To-morrow thou wilt smile at these vain fancies.

MYRRHA.

If the worst come, I shall be where none weep,
And that is better than the power to smile.
And thou?

SARDANAPALUS.

I shall be king, as heretofore.

MYRRHA.

Where?

SARDANAPALUS.

With Baal, Nimrod and Semiramis,

Sole in Assyria, or with them elsewhere.
Fate made me what I am—may make me nothing—
But either that or nothing must I be:
I will not live degraded.

MYRRHA.

Hadst thou felt
Thus always, none would ever dare degrade thee.

SARDANAPALUS.

And who will do so now?

MYRRHA.

Dost thou suspect none?

SARDANAPALUS.

Suspect!—that's a spy's office. Oh! we lose
Ten thousand precious moments in vain words,
And vainer fears. Within there!—Ye slaves, deck
The hall of Nimrod for the evening revel:
If I must make a prison of our palace,
At least we'll wear our fetters jocundly;
If the Euphrates be forbid us, and
The summer dwelling on its beauteous border,
Here we are still unmenaced. Ho! within there!

[*Exit* SARDANAPALUS.

MYRRHA (*solus*).

Why do I love this man? My country's daughters
Love none but heroes. But I have no country!
The slave hath lost all save her bonds. I love him;
And that's the heaviest link of the long chain—
To love whom we esteem not. Be it so:
The hour is coming when he'll need all love,
And find none. To fall from him now were baser
Than to have stabb'd him on his throne when highest
Would have been noble in my country's creed;
I was not made for either. Could I save him,
I should not love *him* better, but myself;
And I have need of the last, for I have fallen
In my own thoughts, by loving this soft stranger:
And yet methinks I love him more, perceiving
That he is hated of his own barbarians,
The natural foes of all the blood of Greece.
Could I but wake a single thought like those
Which even the Phrygians felt, when battling long
'Twixt Ilion and the sea, within his heart,
He would tread down the barbarous crowds, and triumph.
He loves me, and I love him; the slave loves

Her master, and would free him from his vices.
If not, I have a means of freedom still,
And if I cannot teach him how to reign,
May show him how alone a king can leave
His throne. I must not lose him from my sight.
[*Exit*.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

The Portal of the same Hall of the Palace.

BELESES (*solus*).

The sun goes down: methinks he sets more slowly,
Taking his last look of Assyria's empire.
How red he glares amongst those deepening clouds,
Like the blood he predicts. If not in vain,
Thou sun that sinkest, and ye stars which rise,
I have outwatch'd ye, reading ray by ray
The edicts of your orbs, which make Time tremble
For what he brings the nations, 'tis the furthest
Hour of Assyria's years. And yet how calm!
An earthquake should announce so great a fall—
A summer's sun discloses it. Yon disk,
To the star-read Chaldean, bears upon
Its everlasting page the end of what
Seem'd everlasting; but oh! thou true sun!
The burning oracle of all that live,
As fountain of all life, and symbol of
Him who bestows it, wherefore dost thou limit

Thy lore unto calamity? Why not
Unfold the rise of days more worthy thine
All-glorious burst from ocean? why not dart
A beam of hope athwart the future's years,
As of wrath to its days? Hear me! oh! hear me!
I am thy worshipper, thy priest, thy servant—
I have gazed on thee at thy rise and fall,
And bow'd my head beneath thy mid-day beams,
When my eye dared not meet thee. I have watch'd
For thee, and after thee, and pray'd to thee,
And sacrificed to thee, and read, and fear'd thee,
And ask'd of thee, and thou hast answer'd—but
Only to thus much: while I speak, he sinks—
Is gone—and leaves his beauty, not his knowledge,
To the delighted west, which revels in
Its hues of dying glory. Yet what is
Death, so it be but glorious? 'Tis a sunset;
And mortals may be happy to resemble
The gods but in decay.

Enter ARBACES, *by an inner door.*

ARBACES.

Beleses, why
So rapt in thy devotions? Dost thou stand

Gazing to trace thy disappearing god
Into some realm of undiscover'd day?
Our business is with night—'tis come.

BELESES.

But not
Gone

ARBACES.

Let it roll on—we are ready.

BELESES.

Yes.
Would it were over!

ARBACES.

Does the Prophet doubt,
To whom the very stars shine victory?

BELESES.

I do not doubt of victory—but the victor.

ARBACES.

Well, let thy science settle that. Meantime,
I have prepared as many glittering spears
As will out-sparkle our allies—your planets.
There is no more to thwart us. The she-king,
That less than woman, is even now upon
The waters with his female mates. The order

Is issued for the feast in the pavilion.
The first cup which he drains will be the last
Quaff'd by the line of Nimrod.

BELESES.

'Twas a brave one.

ARBACES.

And is a weak one—'tis worn out—we'll mend it.

BELESES.

Art sure of that?

ARBACES.

Its founder was a hunter—
I am a soldier—what is there to fear?

BELESES.

The soldier.

ARBACES.

And the priest, it may be; but
If you thought thus, or think, why not retain
Your king of concubines? why stir me up?
Why spur me to this enterprise? your own
No less than mine?

BELESES.

Look to the sky!

ARBACES.

I look.

BELESES.

What seest thou?

ARBACES.

A fair summer's twilight, and
The gathering of the stars.

BELESES.

And midst them, mark
Yon earliest, and the brightest, which so quivers,
As it would quit its place in the blue ether.

ARBACES.

Well?

BELESES.

'Tis thy natal ruler—thy birth planet.

ARBACES (*touching his scabbard*).

My star is in this scabbard: when it shines,
It shall out-dazzle comets. Let us think
Of what is to be done to justify
Thy planets and their portents. When we conquer,
They shall have temples—ay, and priests—and thou
Shalt be the pontiff of—what gods thou wilt;
For I observe that they are ever just,
And own the bravest for the most devout.

BELESES.

Ay, and the most devout for brave—thou hast not
Seen me turn back from battle.

ARBACES.

No; I own thee
As firm in fight as Babylonia's captain,
As skilful in Chaldea's worship; now,
Will it but please thee to forget the priest,
And be the warrior?

BELESES.

Why not both?

ARBACES.

The better,
And yet it almost shames me, we shall have
So little to effect. This woman's warfare
Degrades the very conqueror. To have pluck'd
A bold and bloody despot from his throne,
And grappled with him, clashing steel with steel,
That were heroic or to win or fall;
But to upraise my sword against this silkworm,
And hear him whine, it may be——

BELESES.

Do not deem it:

He has that in him which may make you strife yet,
And were he all you think, his guards are hardy,
And headed by the cool, stern Salemenes.

ARBACES.

They'll not resist.

BELESES.

Why not? they are soldiers.

ARBACES.

True,
And therefore need a soldier to command them.

BELESES.

That Salemenes is.

ARBACES.

But not their king.
Besides, he hates the effeminate thing that governs,
For the queen's sake, his sister. Mark you not
He keeps aloof from all the revels?

BELESES.

But
Not from the council—there he is ever constant.

ARBACES.

And ever thwarted; what would you have more
To make a rebel out of? A fool reigning,

His blood dishonour'd, and himself disdain'd ;
Why, it is *his* revenge we work for.

BELESES.

Could
He but be brought to think so : this I doubt of.

ARBACES.

What if we sound him ?

BELESES.

Yes—if the time served

Enter BALEA.

BALEA.

Satraps ! the king commands your presence at
The feast to-night.

BELESES.

To hear is to obey.
In the pavilion ?

BALEA.

No ; here in the palace.

ARBACES.

How ! in the palace ? it was not thus order'd.

BALEA.

It is so order'd now.

ARBACES.

And why?

BALEA.

I know not.

May I retire?

ARBACES.

Stay,

BELESES (*to* ARBACES *aside*).

Hush! let him go his way.

(*Alternately to* BALEA.) Yes, Balea, thank the monarch, kiss the hem
Of his imperial robe, and say, his slaves
Will take the crums he deigns to scatter from
His royal table at the hour—was 't midnight?

BALEA.

It was; the place, the Hall of Nimrod. Lords,
I humble me before you and depart. [*Exit* BALEA.

ARBACES.

I like not this same sudden change of place,
There is some mystery; wherefore should he change it?

BELESES.

Doth he not change a thousand times a day?
Sloth is of all things the most fanciful—

And moves more parasangs in its intents
Than generals in their marches, when they seek
To leave their foe at fault.—Why dost thou muse?

ARBACES.

He loved that gay pavilion—it was ever
His summer dotage.

BELESES.

And he loved his queen—
And thrice a thousand harlotry besides—
And he has loved all things by turns, except
Wisdom and glory.

ARBACES.

Still—I like it not.
If he has changed—why so must we: the attack
Were easy in the isolated bower,
Beset with drowsy guards and drunken courtiers;
But in the Hall of Nimrod——

BELESES.

Is it so?
Methought the haughty soldier fear'd to mount
A throne too easily: does it disappoint thee
To find there is a slipperier step or two
Than what was counted on?

ARBACES.

When the hour comes,
Thou shalt perceive how far I fear or no.
Thou hast seen my life at stake—and gaily play'd
for:
But here is more upon the dye—a kingdom.

BELESES.

I have foretold already—thou wilt win it:
Then on, and prosper.

ARBACES.

Now, were I a soothsayer,
I would have boded so much to myself.
But be the stars obey'd—I cannot quarrel
With them, nor their interpreter. Who's here?

Enter SALEMENES.

SALEMENES.

Satraps!

BELESES.

My prince!

SALEMENES.

Well met—I sought ye both,
But elsewhere than the palace.

ARBACES.

Wherefore so?

SALEMENES.

'Tis not the hour.

ARBACES.

The hour—what hour?

SALEMENES.

Of midnight.

BELESES.

Midnight, my lord!

SALEMENES.

What, are you not invited?

BELESES.

Oh! yes—we had forgotten.

SALEMENES.

Is it usual

Thus to forget a sovereign's invitation?

ARBACES.

Why—we but now received it.

SALEMENES.

Then why here?

ARBACES.

On duty.

SALEMENES.

On what duty?

BELESES.

On the state's.
We have the privilege to approach the presence,
But found the monarch absent.

SALEMENES.

And I too
Am upon duty.

ARBACES.

May we crave its purport?

SALEMENES.

To arrest two traitors. Guards! within there!

Enter Guards.

SALEMENES (*continuing*).

Satraps,
Your swords.

BELESES (*delivering his*).

My lord, behold my scimitar.

ARBACES (*drawing his sword*).

Take mine.

SALEMENES (*advancing*).

I will.

ARBACES.

But in your heart the blade-
The hilt quits not this hand.

SALEMENES (*drawing*).

How! dost thou brave me?
'Tis well—this saves a trial and false mercy.
Soldiers, hew down the rebel!

ARBACES.

Soldiers! Ay—
Alone you dare not.

SALEMENES.

Alone! foolish slave—
What is there in thee that a prince should shrink from
Of open force? We dread thy treason, not
Thy strength: thy tooth is nought without its venom—
The serpent's, not the lion's. Cut him down.

BELESES (*interposing*).

Arbaces! are you mad? Have I not render'd
My sword? Then trust like me our sovereign's justice.

ARBACES.

No—I will sooner trust the stars thou prat'st of
And this slight arm, and die a king at least
Of my own breath and body—so far that
None else shall chain them.

SALEMENES (*to the Guards*).

You hear *him*, and *me*.
Take him not—kill.

[*The Guards attack* ARBACES, *who defends himself valiantly and dexterously till they waver.*

SALEMENES.

Is it even so; and must
I do the hangman's office? Recreants! see
How you should fell a traitor.

[SALEMENES *attacks* ARBACES.

Enter SARDANAPALUS *and Train.*

SARDANAPALUS.

Hold your hands—
Upon your lives, I say. What, deaf or drunken?
My sword! Oh fool, I wear no sword: here, fellow,
Give me thy weapon. [*To a Guard.*

[SARDANAPALUS *snatches a sword from one of the soldiers, and makes between the combatants—they separate.*

SARDANAPALUS.

In my very palace!

What hinders me from cleaving you in twain,
Audacious brawlers?

BELESES.

Sire, your justice.

SALEMENES.

Or—
Your weakness.

SARDANAPALUS (*raising the sword*).

How?

SALEMENES.

Strike! so the blow's repeated
Upon yon traitor—whom you spare a moment,
I trust, for torture—I'm content.

SARDANAPALUS.

What—him!
Who dares assail Arbaces?

SALEMENES.

I!

SARDANAPALUS.

Indeed!
Prince, you forget yourself. Upon what warrant?

SALEMENES (*showing the signet*).

Thine.

ARBACES (*confused*).

The king's!

SALEMENES.

Yes!—and let the king confirm it.

SARDANAPALUS.

I parted not from this for such a purpose.

SALEMENES.

You parted with it for your safety—I
Employ'd it for the best. Pronounce in person.
Here I am but your slave—a moment past
I was your representative.

SARDANAPALUS.

Then sheathe
Your swords.

[ARBACES *and* SALEMENES *return their swords to the scabbards.*

SALEMENES.

Mine's sheathed: I pray you sheathe *not* yours;
'Tis the sole sceptre left you now with safety.

SARDANAPALUS.

A heavy one; the hilt, too, hurts my hand.
(*To a Guard*). Here, fellow, take thy weapon back. Well, sirs,
What doth this mean?

BELESES.

The prince must answer that.

SALEMENES.

Truth upon my part, treason upon theirs

SARDANAPALUS.

Treason—Arbaces! treachery and Beleses!
That were an union I will not believe.

BELESES.

Where is the proof?

SALEMENES.

I'll answer that, if once
The king demands your fellow traitor's sword.

ARBACES (*to* SALEMENES).

A sword which hath been drawn as oft as thine
Against his foes.

SALEMENES.

And now against his brother,
And in an hour or so against himself.

SARDANAPALUS.

That is not possible: he dared not; no—
No—I'll not hear of such things. These vain bickerings
Are spawn'd in courts by base intrigues and baser

Hirelings, who live by lies on good men's lives.
You must have been deceived, my brother.

SALEMENES.

First
Let him deliver up his weapon, and
Proclaim himself your subject by that duty,
And I will answer all.

SARDANAPALUS.

Why, if I thought so—
But no, it cannot be; the Mede Arbaces—
The trusty, rough, true soldier—the best captain
Of all who discipline our nations——No,
I'll not insult him thus, to bid him render
The scimitar to me he never yielded
Unto our enemies. Chief, keep your weapon.

SALEMENES (*delivering back the signet*).

Monarch, take back your signet.

SARDANAPALUS.

No, retain it;
But use it with more moderation.

SALEMENES.

Sire,
I used it for your honour, and restore it

Because I cannot keep it with my own.
Bestow it on Arbaces.

SARDANAPALUS.

So I should:
He never ask'd it.

SALEMENES.

Doubt not, he will have it
Without that hollow semblance of respect.

BELESES.

I know not what hath prejudiced the prince
So strongly 'gainst two subjects, than whom none
Have been more zealous for Assyria's weal.

SALEMENES.

Peace, factious priest and faithless soldier! thou
Unit'st in thy own person the worst vices
Of the most dangerous orders of mankind.
Keep thy smooth words and juggling homilies
For those who know thee not. Thy fellow's sin
Is, at the least, a bold one, and not temper'd
By the tricks taught thee in Chaldea.

BELESES.

Hear him,
My liege—the son of Belus! he blasphemes

The worship of the land which bows the knee
Before your fathers.

SARDANAPALUS.

Oh! for that I pray you
Let him have absolution. I dispense with
The worship of dead men; feeling that I
Am mortal, and believing that the race
From whence I sprung are—what I see them—
ashes.

BELESES.

King! Do not deem so: they are with the stars,
And——

SARDANAPALUS.

You shall join them there ere they will rise,
If you preach farther.—Why, *this* is rank treason.

SALEMENES.

My Lord!

SARDANAPALUS.

To school me in the worship of
Assyria's idols! Let him be released—
Give him his sword.

SALEMENES.

My lord, and king, and brother,
I pray ye pause.

SARDANAPALUS.

Yes, and be sermonized,
And dinn'd, and deafen'd with dead men and Baal,
And all Chaldea's starry mysteries.

BELESES.

Monarch ! respect them.

SARDANAPALUS.

Oh ! for that—I love them ;
I love to watch them in the deep blue vault,
And to compare them with my Myrrha's eyes ;
I love to see their rays redoubled in
The tremulous silver of Euphrates' wave,
As the light breeze of midnight crisps the broad
And rolling water, sighing through the sedges
Which fringe his banks : but whether they may be
Gods, as some say, or the abodes of gods,
As others hold, or simply lamps of night,
Worlds or the lights of worlds, I know nor care not.
There's something sweet in my uncertainty
I would not change for your Chaldean lore ;
Besides, I know of these all clay can know
Of aught above it or below it—nothing.
I see their brilliancy and feel their beauty—
When they shine on my grave I shall know neither

BELESES.

For *neither*, sire, say *better*.

SARDANAPALUS.

I will wait,
If it so please you, pontiff, for that knowledge.
In the mean time receive your sword, and know
That I prefer your service militant
Unto your ministry—not loving either.

SALEMENES (*aside*).

His lusts have made him mad. Then must I save
him
Spite of himself.

SARDANAPALUS.

Please you to hear me, Satraps!
And chiefly thou, my priest, because I doubt thee
More than the soldier, and would doubt thee all
Wert thou not half a warrior: let us part
In peace—I'll not say pardon—which must be
Earn'd by the guilty; this I'll not pronounce ye,
Although upon this breath of mine depends
Your own; and, deadlier for ye, on my fears.
But fear not—for that I am soft, not fearful—
And so live on. Were I the thing some think me,
Your heads would now be dripping the last drops

Of their attainted gore from the high gates
Of this our palace into the dry dust,
Their only portion of the coveted kingdom
They would be crown'd to reign o'er—let that
pass.
As I have said, I will not *deem* ye guilty,
Nor *doom* ye guiltless. Albeit, better men
Than ye or I stand ready to arraign you;
And should I leave your fate to sterner judges,
And proofs of all kinds, I might sacrifice
Two men, who, whatsoe'er they now are, were
Once honest. Ye are free, sirs.

ARBACES.

Sire, this clemency——

BELESES (*interrupting him*).

Is worthy of yourself; and, although innocent,
We thank——

SARDANAPALUS.

Priest! keep your thanksgivings for Belus;
His offspring needs none.

BELESES.

But, being innocent——

SARDANAPALUS.

Be silent—Guilt is loud. If ye are loyal,

Ye are injured men, and should be sad, not
grateful.

BELESES.

So we should be, were justice always done
By earthly power omnipotent ; but innocence
Must oft receive her right as a mere favour.

SARDANAPALUS.

That's a good sentence for a homily,
Though not for this occasion. Prithee keep it
To plead thy sovereign's cause before his people.

BELESES.

I trust there is no cause.

SARDANAPALUS.

No *cause*, perhaps ;
But many causers :—if ye meet with such
In the exercise of your inquisitive function
On earth, or should you read of it in heaven
In some mysterious twinkle of the stars,
Which are your chronicles, I pray you note,
That there are worse things betwixt earth and
heaven
Than him who ruleth many and slays none ,
And, hating not himself, yet loves his fellows

Enough to spare even those who would not spare
him,
Were they once masters—but that's doubtful Satraps!
Your swords and persons are at liberty
To use them as ye will—but from this hour
I have no call for either. Salemenes!
Follow me.

[*Exeunt* SARDANAPALUS, SALEMENES, *and the Train, etc. leaving* ARBACES *and* BELESES.

ARBACES.

Beleses!

BELESES.

Now, what think you?

ARBACES.

That we are lost.

BELESES.

That we have won the kingdom.

ARBACES.

What? thus suspected—with the sword slung o'er
us
But by a single hair, and that still wavering
To be blown down by his imperious breath,
Which spared us—why, I know not.

BELESES.

Seek not why,
But let us profit by the interval.
The hour is still our own—our power the same—
The night the same we destined. He hath changed
Nothing, except our ignorance of all
Suspicion into such a certainty
As must make madness of delay.

ARBACES.

And yet——

BELESES.

What, doubting still?

ARBACES.

He spared our lives—nay, more,
Saved them from Salemenes.

BELESES.

And how long
Will he so spare? till the first drunken minute.

ARBACES.

Or sober, rather. Yet he did it nobly;
Gave royally what we had forfeited
Basely——

BELESES.

Say bravely.

ARBACES.

Somewhat of both, perhaps.
But it has touch'd me, and, whate'er betide,
I will no further on.

BELESES.

And lose the world!

ARBACES.

Lose any thing, except my own esteem.

BELESES.

I blush that we should owe our lives to such
A king of distaffs!

ARBACES.

But no less we owe them,
And I should blush far more to take the grantor's!

BELESES.

Thou may'st endure whate'er thou wilt, the stars
Have written otherwise.

ARBACES.

Though they came down,
And marshall'd me the way in all their brightness,
I would not follow.

BELESES.

This is weakness—worse

Than a scared beldam's dreaming of the dead,
And waking in the dark.—Go to—go to.

ARBACES.

Methought he look'd like Nimrod as he spoke,
Even as the proud imperial statue stands
Looking the monarch of the kings around it,
And sways, while they but ornament, the temple.

BELESES.

I told you that you had too much despised him,
And that there was some royalty within him.
What then? he is the nobler foe.

ARBACES.

But we
The meaner:—Would he had not spared us!

BELESES.

So—
Wouldst thou be sacrificed thus readily?

ARBACES.

No—but it had been better to have died
Than live ungrateful.

BELESES.

Oh, the souls of some men!
Thou wouldst digest what some call treason, and
Fools treachery—and, behold, upon the sudden,

Because, for something or for nothing, this
Rash reveller steps, ostentatiously,
'Twixt thee and Salemenes, thou art turn'd
Into—what shall I say ?—Sardanapalus !
I know no name more ignominious.

ARBACES.

But
An hour ago, who dared to term me such
Had held his life but lightly—as it is,
I must forgive you, even as he forgave us—
Semiramis herself would not have done it.

BELESES.

No—the queen liked no sharers of the kingdom,
Not even a husband.

ARBACES.

I must serve him truly——

BELESES.

And humbly ?

ARBACES.

No, sir, proudly—being honest.
I shall be nearer thrones than you to heaven ;
And if not quite so haughty, yet more lofty.
You may do your own deeming—you have codes,
And mysteries, and corollaries of

Right and wrong, which I lack for my direction,
And must pursue but what a plain heart teaches.
And now you know me.

BELESES.

Have you finish'd?

ARBACES.

Yes—
With you.

BELESES.

And would, perhaps, betray as well
As quit me?

ARBACES.

That's a sacerdotal thought,
And not a soldier's.

BELESES.

Be it what you will—
Truce with these wranglings, and but hear me.

ARBACES.

No—
There is more peril in your subtle spirit
Than in a phalanx.

BELESES.

If it must be:
I'll on alone.

ARBACES.

Alone!

BELESES.

Thrones hold but one.

ARBACES.

But this is fill'd.

BELESES.

With worse than vacancy—
A despised monarch. Look to it, Arbaces:
I have still aided, cherish'd, loved, and urged you;
Was willing even to serve you, in the hope
To serve and save Assyria. Heaven itself
Seem'd to consent, and all events were friendly,
Even to the last, till that your spirit shrunk
Into a shallow softness; but now, rather
Than see my country languish, I will be
Her saviour or the victim of her tyrant,
Or one or both, for sometimes both are one:
And if I win, Arbaces is my servant.

ARBACES.

Your servant!

BELESES.

Why not? better than be slave,
The *pardon'd* slave of *she* Sardanapalus.

Enter PANIA.

PANIA.

My lords, I bear an order from the king.

ARBACES.

It is obey'd ere spoken.

BELESES.

Notwithstanding,
Let's hear it.

PANIA.

Forthwith, on this very night,
Repair to your respective satrapies
Of Babylon and Media.

BELESES.

With our troops?

PANIA.

My order is unto the satraps and
Their household train.

ARBACES.

But——

BELESES.

It must be obey'd;
Say, we depart.

PANIA.

My order is to see you
Depart, and not to bear your answer.

BELESES (*aside*).

Ay!
Well, sir, we will accompany you hence.

PANIA.

I will retire to marshal forth the guard
Of honour which befits your rank, and wait
Your leisure, so that it the hour exceeds not.

[*Exit* PANIA.

BELESES.

Now then obey!

ARBACES.

Doubtless.

BELESES.

Yes, to the gates
That grate the palace, which is now our prison,
No further.

ARBACES.

Thou hast harp'd the truth indeed!
The realm itself, in all its wide extension,
Yawns dungeons at each step for thee and me.

BELESES.

Graves!

ARBACES.

If I thought so, this good sword should dig
One more than mine.

BELESES.

It shall have work enough:
Let me hope better than thou augurest;
At present let us hence as best we may.
Thou dost agree with me in understanding
This order as a sentence?

ARBACES.

Why, what other
Interpretation should it bear? it is
The very policy of orient monarchs—
Pardon and poison—favours and a sword—
A distant voyage, and an eternal sleep.
How many satraps in his father's time—
For he I own is, or at least *was*, bloodless—

BELESES.

But *will* not, *can* not be so now.

ARBACES.

I doubt it.
How many satraps have I seen set out
In his sire's day for mighty vice-royalties,
Whose tombs are on their path! I know not how,
But they all sicken'd by the way, it was
So long and heavy.

BELESES.

Let us but regain
The free air of the city, and we'll shorten
The journey.

ARBACES.

'Twill be shorten'd at the gates,
It may be.

BELESES.

No; they hardly will risk that.
They mean us to die privately, but not
Within the palace or the city walls,
Where we are known and may have partisans:
If they had meant to slay us here, we were
No longer with the living. Let us hence.

ARBACES.

If I but thought he did not mean my life——

BELESES.

Fool! hence—what else should despotism alarm'd
Mean? Let us but rejoin our troops, and march.

ARBACES.

Towards our provinces?

BELESES.

No; towards your kingdom.

There's time, there's heart, and hope, and power, and means,
Which their half measures leave us in full scope.—
Away!

ARBACES.

And I even yet repenting, must
Relapse to guilt!

BELESES.

Self-defence is a virtue,
Sole bulwark of all right. Away, I say!
Let's leave this place, the air grows thick and choking,
And the walls have a scent of nightshade—hence!
Let us not leave them time for further council.
Our quick departure proves our civic zeal;
Our quick departure hinders our good escort,
The worthy Pania, from anticipating
The orders of some parasangs from hence;
Nay, there's no other choice but——hence, I say.
[*Exit with* ARBACES, *who follows reluctantly*.

Enter SARDANAPALUS *and* SALEMENES.

SARDANAPALUS.

Well, all is remedied, and without bloodshed,

That worst of mockeries of a remedy;
We are now secure by these men's exile.

SALEMENES.

Yes,
As he who treads on flowers is from the adder
Twined round their roots.

SARDANAPALUS.

Why, what wouldst have me do?

SALEMENES.

Undo what you have done.

SARDANAPALUS.

Revoke my pardon?

SALEMENES.

Replace the crown, now tottering on your temples.

SARDANAPALUS.

That were tyrannical.

SALEMENES.

But sure.

SARDANAPALUS.

We are so.
What danger can they work upon the frontier?

SALEMENES.

They are not there yet—never should they be so,
Were I well listen'd to.

SARDANAPALUS.

Nay, I *have* listen'd
Impartially to thee—why not to them?

SALEMENES.

You may know that hereafter; as it is,
I take my leave, to order forth the guard.

SARDANAPALUS.

And you will join us at the banquet?

SALEMENES.

Sire,
Dispense with me—I am no wassailer:
Command me in all service save the Bacchant's.

SARDANAPALUS.

Nay, but 'tis fit to revel now and then.

SALEMENES.

And fit that some should watch for those who revel
Too oft. Am I permitted to depart?

SARDANAPALUS.

Yes——Stay a moment, my good Salemenes,
My brother, my best subject, better prince
Than I am king. You should have been the monarch,
And I—I know not what, and care not; but
Think not I am insensible to all

Thine honest wisdom, and thy rough, yet kind,
Though oft reproving, sufferance of my follies.
If I have spared these men against thy counsel,
That is, their lives—it is not that I doubt
The advice was sound; but, let them live: we will
not
Cavil about their lives—so let them mend them.
Their banishment will leave me still sound sleep,
Which their death had not left me.

SALEMENES.

Thus you run
The risk to sleep for ever, to save traitors—
A moment's pang now changed for years of crime.
Still let them be made quiet.

SARDANAPALUS.

Tempt me not:
My word is past.

SALEMENES.

But it may be recall'd.

SARDANAPALUS.

'Tis royal.

SALEMENES.

And should therefore be decisive.
This half indulgence of an exile serves

But to provoke—a pardon should be full,
Or it is none.

SARDANAPALUS.

And who persuaded me
After I had repeal'd them, or at least
Only dismiss'd them from our presence, who
Urged me to send them to their satrapies?

SALEMENES.

True; that I had forgotten; that is, sire,
If they e'er reach their satrapies—why, then,
Reprove me more for my advice.

SARDANAPALUS.

And if
They do not reach them—look to it!—in safety,
In safety, mark me—and security—
Look to thine own.

SALEMENES.

Permit me to depart;
Their *safety* shall be cared for.

SARDANAPALUS.

Get thee hence, then;
And, prithee, think more gently of thy brother.

SALEMENES.

Sire, I shall ever duly serve my sovereign.

[*Exit* SALEMENES.

SARDANAPALUS (*solus*).

That man is of a temper too severe :
Hard but as lofty as the rock, and free
From all the taints of common earth—while I
Am softer clay, impregnated with flowers.
But as our mould is, must the produce be.
If I have err'd this time, 'tis on the side
Where error sits most lightly on that sense,
I know not what to call it ; but it reckons
With me ofttimes for pain, and sometimes pleasure ;
A spirit which seems placed about my heart
To court its throbs, not quicken them, and ask
Questions which mortal never dared to ask me,
Nor Baal, though an oracular deity—
Albeit his marble face majestical
Frowns as the shadows of the evening dim
His brows to changed expression, till at times
I think the statue looks in act to speak.
Away with these vain thoughts, I will be joyous—
And here comes Joy's true herald.

Enter MYRRHA.

MYRRHA.

King ! the sky

Is overcast, and musters muttering thunder,
In clouds that seem approaching fast, and show
In forked flashes a commanding tempest.
Will you then quit the palace?

SARDANAPALUS.

Tempest, sayst thou!

MYRRHA.

Ay, my good lord.

SARDANAPALUS.

For my own part, I should be
Not ill content to vary the smooth scene,
And watch the warring elements; but this
Would little suit the silken garments and
Smooth faces of our festive friends. Say, Myrrha,
Art thou of those who dread the roar of clouds?

MYRRHA.

In my own country we respect their voices
As auguries of Jove.

SARDANAPALUS.

Jove—ay, your Baal—
Ours also has a property in thunder,
And ever and anon some falling bolt
Proves his divinity, and yet sometimes
Strikes his own altars.

MYRRHA.

That were a dread omen.

SARDANAPALUS.

Yes—for the priests. Well, we will not go forth
Beyond the palace walls to-night, but make
Our feast within.

MYRRHA.

Now, Jove be praised! that he
Hath heard the prayer thou wouldst not hear.
The gods
Are kinder to thee than thou to thyself,
And flash this storm between thee and thy foes,
To shield thee from them.

SARDANAPALUS.

Child, if there be peril,
Methinks it is the same within these walls
As on the river's brink.

MYRRHA.

Not so, these walls
Are high and strong, and guarded. Treason has
To penetrate through many a winding way,
And massy portal! but in the pavilion
There is no bulwark.

SARDANAPALUS.

No, nor in the palace,
Nor in the fortress, nor upon the top
Of cloud-fenced Caucasus, where the eagle sits
Nested in pathless clefts, if treachery be :
Even as the arrow finds the airy king,
The steel will reach the earthly. But be calm :
The men, or innocent or guilty, are
Banish'd, and far upon their way.

MYRRHA.

They live, then?

SARDANAPALUS.

So sanguinary? *Thou!*

MYRRHA.

I would not shrink
From just infliction of due punishment
On those who seek your life : wer't otherwise,
I should not merit mine. Besides, you heard
The princely Salemenes.

SARDANAPALUS.

This is strange,
The gentle and the austere are both against me,
And urge me to revenge.

MYRRHA.

'Tis a Greek virtue.

SARDANAPALUS.

But not a kingly one—I'll none on 't; or,
If ever I indulge in 't, it shall be
With kings—my equals.

MYRRHA.

These men sought to be so.

SARDANAPALUS.

Myrrha, this is too feminine, and springs
From fear——

MYRRHA.

For you.

SARDANAPALUS.

No matter—still 'tis fear.
I have observed your sex, once roused to wrath,
Are timidly vindictive to a pitch
Of perseverance, which I would not copy.
I thought you were exempt from this, as from
The childish helplessness of Asian women.

MYRRHA.

My lord, I am no boaster of my love,
Nor of my attributes; I have shared your splendour,

And will partake your fortunes. You may live
To find one slave more true than subject myriads;
But this the gods avert! I am content
To be beloved on trust for what I feel,
Rather than prove it to you in your griefs,
Which might not yield to any cares of mine.

SARDANAPALUS.

Griefs cannot come where perfect love exists,
Except to heighten it, and vanish from
That which it could not scare away. Let's in—
The hour approaches, and we must prepare
To meet the invited guests, who grace our feast.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.

The Hall of the Palace illuminated—SARDANAPALUS *and his Guests at Table—A Storm without, and Thunder occasionally heard during the Banquet.*

SARDANAPALUS.

Fill full! Why this is as it should be: here
Is my true realm, amidst bright eyes and faces
Happy as fair! Here sorrow cannot reach.

ZAMES.

Nor elsewhere—where the king is, pleasure sparkles

SARDANAPALUS.

Is not this better now than Nimrod's huntings,
Or my wild grandam's chase in search of kingdoms
She could not keep when conquer'd?

ALTADA.

Mighty though
They were, as all thy royal line have been,
Yet none of those who went before have reach'd
The acme of Sardanapalus, who
Has placed his joy in peace—the sole true glory.

SARDANAPALUS.

And pleasure, good Altada, to which glory
Is but the path. What is it that we seek?
Enjoyment! We have cut the way short to it,
And not gone tracking it through human ashes,
Making a grave with every footstep.

ZAMES.

No;
All hearts are happy, and all voices bless
The king of peace, who holds a world in jubilee.

SARDANAPALUS.

Art sure of that? I have heard otherwise,
Some say that there be traitors.

ZAMES.

Traitors they
Who dare to say so!—'Tis impossible.
What cause?

SARDANAPALUS.

What cause? true,—fill the goblet up;
We will not think of them: there are none such,
Or if there be, they are gone.

ALTADA.

Guests, to my pledge!

Down on your knees, and drink a measure to
The safety of the king—the monarch, say I?
The god Sardanapalus!

[ZAMES *and the Guests kneel, and exclaim—*

Mightier than
His father Baal, the god Sardanapalus!

[*It thunders as they kneel; some start up in confusion.*

ZAMES.

Why do ye rise, my friends? In that strong peal
His father gods consented.

MYRRHA.

Menaced, rather.
King, wilt thou bear this mad impiety.

SARDANAPALUS.

Impiety!—nay, if the sires who reign'd
Before me can be gods, I'll not disgrace
Their lineage. But arise, my pious friends.
Hoard your devotion for the thunderer there:
I seek but to be loved, not worshipp'd.

ALTADA

Both—
Both you must ever be by all true subjects.

SARDANAPALUS.

Methinks the thunders still increase: it is
An awful night.

MYRRHA.

Oh yes, for those who have
No palace to protect their worshippers.

SARDANAPALUS.

That's true, my Myrrha; and could I convert
My realm to one wide shelter for the wretched,
I'd do it.

MYRRHA.

Thou'rt no god, then, not to be
Able to work a will so good and general,
As thy wish would imply.

SARDANAPALUS.

And your gods, then,
Who can, and do not?

MYRRHA.

Do not speak of that,
Lest we provoke them.

SARDANAPALUS.

True, they love not censure
Better than mortals. Friends, a thought has struck
me:

Were there no temples, would there, think ye, be
Air worshippers—that is, when it is angry,
And pelting as even now?

MYRRHA.

The Persian prays
Upon his mountain.

SARDANAPALUS.

Yes, when the sun shines.

MYRRHA.

And I would ask if this your palace were
Unroof'd and desolate, how many flatterers
Would lick the dust in which the king lay low?

ALTADA.

The fair Ionian is too sarcastic
Upon a nation whom she knows not well,
The Assyrians know no pleasure but their king's,
And homage is their pride.

SARDANAPALUS.

Nay, pardon, guests,
The fair Greek's readiness of speech.

ALTADA.

Pardon! sire:
We honour her of all things next to thee.
Hark! what was that?

ZAMES.

That! nothing but the jar
Of distant portals shaken by the wind.

ALTADA.

It sounded like the clash of—hark again!

ZAMES.

The big rain pattering on the roof.

SARDANAPALUS.

No more.
Myrrha, my love, hast thou thy shell in order?
Sing me a song of Sappho, her, thou know'st,
Who in thy country threw——

Enter PANIA, *with his Sword and Garments bloody, and disordered. The Guests rise in confusion.*

PANIA (*to the guards*).

Look to the portals;
And with your best speed to the wall without.
Your arms! To arms! The king's in danger. Monarch!
Excuse this haste,—'tis faith.

SARDANAPALUS.

Speak on.

PANIA.

It is
As Salemenes fear'd; the faithless satraps——

SARDANAPALUS.

You are wounded—give some wine. Take breath,
good Pania.

PANIA.

'Tis nothing—a mere flesh wound. I am worn
More with my speed to warn my sovereign,
Than hurt in his defence.

MYRRHA.

Well, sir, the rebels.

PANIA.

Soon as Arbaces and Beleses reach'd
Their stations in the city, they refused
To march: and on my attempt to use the power
Which I was delegated with, they call'd
Upon their troops, who rose in fierce defiance.

MYRRHA.

All?

PANIA.

Too many.

SARDANAPALUS.

Spare not of thy free speech
To spare mine ears the truth.

PANIA.

My own slight guard
Were faithful—and what's left of it is still so.

MYRRHA.

And are these all the force still faithful?

PANIA.

No—
The Bactrians, now led on by Salemenes,
Who even then was on his way, still urged
By strong suspicion of the Median chiefs,
Are numerous, and make strong head against
The rebels, fighting inch by inch, and forming
An orb around the palace, where they mean
To centre all their force, and save the king.
(*He hesitates.*) I am charged to——

MYRRHA.

'Tis no time for hesitation.

PANIA.

Prince Salemenes doth implore the king
To arm himself, although but for a moment,
And show himself unto the soldiers: his

Sole presence in this instant might do more
Than hosts can do in his behalf.

SARDANAPALUS.

What, ho!
My armour there.

MYRRHA.

And wilt thou?

SARDANAPALUS.

Will I not?
Ho, there!—But seek not for the buckler; 'tis
Too heavy:—a light cuirass and my sword.
Where are the rebels?

PANIA.

Scarce a furlong's length
From the outward wall, the fiercest conflict rages.

SARDANAPALUS.

Then I may charge on horseback. Sfero, ho!
Order my horse out.—There is space enough
Even in our courts, and by the outer gate,
To martial half the horsemen of Arabia.

[*Exit* SFERO *for the armour*.

MYRRHA.

How I do love thee!

SARDANAPALUS.

I ne'er doubted it.

MYRRHA.

But now I know thee.

SARDANAPALUS (*to his attendant*).

Bring down my spear, too.—
Where's Salemenes?

PANIA.

Where a soldier should be,
In the thick of the fight.

SARDANAPALUS.

Then hasten to him——Is
The path still open, and communication
Left 'twixt the palace and the phalanx?

PANIA.

'Twas
When I late left him, and I have no fear:
Our troops were steady, and the phalanx form'd.

SARDANAPALUS.

Tell him to spare his person for the present,
And that I will not spare my own—and say,
I come.

PANIA.

There's victory in the very word.

[*Exit* PANIA

SARDANAPALUS.

Altada—Zames—forth and arm ye! There
Is all in readiness in the armoury.
See that the women are bestow'd in safety
In the remote apartments: let a guard
Be set before them, with strict charge to quit
The post but with their lives—command it,
Zames.
Altada, arm yourself, and return here;
Your post is near our person.

[*Exeunt* ZAMES, ALTADA, *and all save* MYRRHA.

Enter SFERO *and others with the King's Arms, etc.*

SFERO.

King! your armour.

SARDANAPALUS (*arming himself*).

Give me the cuirass—so: my baldric; now
My sword: I had forgot the helm, where is it?
That's well—no, 'tis too heavy: you mistake, too—
It was not this I meant, but that which bears
A diadem around it.

SFERO.

Sire, I deem'd
That too conspicuous from the precious stones

To risk your sacred brow beneath—and, trust me,
This is of better metal though less rich.

SARDANAPALUS.

You deem'd! Are you too turn'd a rebel? Fellow!
Your part is to obey: return, and—no—
It is too late—I will go forth without it.

SFERO.

At least wear this.

SARDANAPALUS.

Wear Caucasus! why, 'tis
A mountain on my temples.

SFERO.

Sire, the meanest
Soldier goes not forth thus exposed to battle.
All men will recognize you—for the storm
Has ceased, and the moon breaks forth in her brightness.

SARDANAPALUS.

I go forth to be recognized, and thus
Shall be so sooner. Now—my spear! I'm arm'd.

[*In going stops short, and turns to* SFERO.

Sfero—I had forgotten—bring the mirror.*

* "Such the *mirror* Otho held
In the Illyrian field."—See *Juvenal.*

SFERO.

The mirror, sire?

SARDANAPALUS.

Yes, sir, of polish'd brass,
Brought from the spoils of India—but be speedy.

[*Exit* SFERO.

Myrrha, retire unto a place of safety.
Why went you not forth with the other damsels?

MYRRHA.

Because my place is here.

SARDANAPALUS.

And when I am gone——

MYRRHA.

I follow.

SARDANAPALUS.

You! to battle?

MYRRHA.

If it were so,
'Twere not the first Greek girl had trod the path.
I will await here your *return*.

SARDANAPALUS.

The place
Is spacious, and the first to be sought out,
If they prevail; and, if it should be so,

And I return not——

MYRRHA.

Still, we meet again.

SARDANAPALUS.

How?

MYRRHA.

In the spot where all must meet at last—
In Hades! if there be, as I believe,
A shore beyond the Styx; and if there be not,
In ashes.

SARDANAPALUS.

Dar'st thou so much?

MYRRHA.

I dare all things,
Except survive what I have loved, to be
A rebel's booty: forth, and do your bravest.

Re-enter SFERO *with the mirror.*

SARDANAPALUS (*looking at himself*).

This cuirass fits me well, the baldric better,
And the helm not at all. Methinks, I seem
[*Flings away the helmet after trying it again.*
Passing well in these toys; and now to prove them.
Altada! Where's Altada?

SFERO.

Waiting, sire,
Without : he has your shield in readiness.

SARDANAPALUS.

True; I forgot he is my shield-bearer
By right of blood, derived from age to age.
Myrrha embrace me; yet once more—once more—
Love me, whate'er betide. My chiefest glory
Shall be to make me worthier of your love.

MYRRHA.

Go forth, and conquer!

[*Exit* SARDANAPALUS *and* SFERO.

Now, I am alone.
All are gone forth, and of that all how few
Perhaps return. Let him but vanquish, and
Me perish! If he vanquish not, I perish;
For I will not outlive him. He has wound
About my heart, I know not how nor why.
Not for that he is king; for now his kingdom
Rocks underneath his throne, and the earth yawns
To yield him no more of it than a grave;
And yet I love him more. Oh, mighty Jove!
Forgive this monstrous love for a barbarian,
Who knows not of Olympus: yes, I love him

Now, now, far more than——Hark—to the war
shout!
Methinks it nears me. If it should be so,
[*She draws forth a small vial.*
This cunning Colchian poison, which my father
Learn'd to compound on Euxine shores, and taught
me
How to preserve, shall free me! It had freed me
Long ere this hour, but that I loved, until
I half forgot I was a slave:—where all
Are slaves save one, and proud of servitude,
So they are served in turn by something lower
In the degree of bondage, we forget
That shackles worn like ornaments no less
Are chains. Again that shout! and now the clash
Of arms—and now—and now—

Enter ALTADA.

ALTADA.

Ho, Sfero, ho!

MYRRHA.

He is not here; what wouldst thou with him? How
Goes on the conflict?

ALTADA.

Dubiously and fiercely.

MYRRHA.

And the king?

ALTADA.

Like a king. I must find Sfero,
And bring him a new spear and his own helmet,
He fights till now bare-headed, and by far
Too much exposed. The soldiers knew his face,
And the foe too; and in the moon's broad light,
His silk tiara and his flowing hair
Make him a mark too royal. Every arrow
Is pointed at the fair hair and fair features,
And the broad fillet which crowns both.

MYRRHA.

Ye gods,
Who fulmine o'er my fathers' land, protect him!
Were you sent by the king?

ALTADA.

By Salemenes,
Who sent me privily upon this charge,
Without the knowledge of the careless sovereign.
The king! the king fights as he revels! ho!

What, Sfero! I will seek the armoury,
He must be there. [*Exit* ALTADA.

MYRRHA.

'Tis no dishonour—no—
'Tis no dishonour to have loved this man.
I almost wish now, what I never wish'd
Before, that he were Grecian. If Alcides
Were shamed in wearing Lydian Omphale's
She-garb, and wielding her vile distaff; surely
He, who springs up a Hercules at once,
Nursed in effeminate arts from youth to manhood,
And rushes from the banquet to the battle,
As though it were a bed of love, deserves
That a Greek girl should be his paramour,
And a Greed bard his minstrel, a Greek tomb
His monument. How goes the strife, sir?

Enter an OFFICER.

OFFICER.

Lost,
Lost almost past recovery. Zames! Where
Is Zames?

MYRRHA.

Posted with the guard appointed

To watch before the apartment of the women.

[*Exit* OFFICER.

MYRRHA (*solus*).

He's gone; and told no more than that all's lost!
What need have I to know more? In those words,
Those little words, a kingdom and a king,
A line of thirteen ages, and the lives
Of thousands, and the fortune of all left
With life, are merged: and I, too, with the great,
Like a small bubble breaking with the wave
Which bore it, shall be nothing. At the least
My fate is in my keeping: no proud victor
Shall count me with his spoils.

Enter PANIA.

PANIA.

Away with me,
Myrrha, without delay; we must not lose
A moment—all that's left us now.

MYRRHA.

The king?

PANIA.

Sent me here to conduct you hence, beyond
The river, by a secret passage.

MYRRHA.

Then
He lives——

PANIA.

And charged me to secure your life,
And beg you to live on for his sake, till
He can rejoin you.

MYRRHA.

Will he then give way?

PANIA.

Not till the last. Still, still he does whate'er
Despair can do; and step by step disputes
The very palace.

MYRRHA.

They are here, then:—ay,
Their shouts come ringing through the ancient halls,
Never profaned by rebel echoes till
This fatal night. Farewell, Assyria's line!
Farewell to all of Nimrod! Even the name
Is now no more.

PANIA.

Away with me—away!

MYRRHA.

No; I'll die here!—Away, and tell your king
I loved him to the last.

[*Enter* SARDANAPALUS *and* SALEMENES *with Soldiers.* PANIA *quits* MYRRHA, *and ranges himself with them.*

SARDANAPALUS.

Since it is thus,
We'll die where we were born—in our own halls.
Serry your ranks—stand firm. I have dispatch'd
A trusty satrap for the guard of Zames,
All fresh and faithful; they'll be here anon.
All is not over.—Pania, look to Myrrha.

[PANIA *returns towards* MYRRHA.

SALEMENES.

We have breathing time: yet one more charge, my friends—
One for Assyria!

SARDANAPALUS.

Rather say for Bactria!
My faithful Bactrians, I will henceforth be
King of your nation, and we'll hold together
This realm as province.

SALEMENES.

Hark! they come—they come.

Enter BELESES *and* ARBACES *with the Rebels.*

ARBACES.

Set on, we have them in the toil. Charge! Charge!

BELESES.

On! on!—Heaven fights for us and with us.—On!

[*They charge the King and* SALEMENES *with their Troops, who defend themselves till the Arrival of* ZAMES *with the Guard before mentioned. The Rebels are then driven off, and pursued by* SALEMENES, *etc. As the King is going to join the pursuit,* BELESES *crosses him.*

BELESES.

Ho! tyrant—*I* will end this war.

SARDANAPALUS.

Even so,
My warlike priest, and precious prophet, and
Grateful and trusty subject:—yield, I pray thee.
I would reserve thee for a fitter doom,
Rather than dip my hands in holy blood.

BELESES.

Thine hour is come.

SARDANAPALUS.

No, thine.—I've lately read,
Though but a young astrologer, the stars;
And ranging round the zodiac, found thy fate
In the sign of the Scorpion, which proclaims
That thou wilt now be crush'd.

BELESES.

But not by thee.

[*They fight;* BELESES *is wounded and disarmed.*

SARDANAPALUS (*raising his sword to dispatch him, exclaims*—)

Now call upon thy planets, will they shoot
From the sky to preserve their seer and credit?

[*A party of Rebels enter and rescue* BELESES. *They assail the King, who, in turn, is rescued by a party of his Soldiers, who drive the Rebels off.*

The villain was a prophet after all.
Upon them—ho! there—victory is ours.

[*Exit in pursuit.*

MYRRHA (*to* PANIA).

Pursue! Why stand'st thou here, and leavest the
ranks
Of fellow-soldiers conquering without thee?

PANIA.

The king's command was not to quit thee.

MYRRHA.

Me!
Think not of me—a single soldier's arm
Must not be wanting now. I ask no guard,
I need no guard: what, with a world at stake,
Keep watch upon a woman? Hence, I say,
Or thou art shamed! Nay, then, *I* will go forth,
A feeble female, 'midst their desperate strife,
And bid thee guard me *there*—where thou shouldst
shield
Thy sovereign. [*Exit* MYRRHA.

PANIA.

Yet stay, damsel! She is gone.
If aught of ill betide her, better I
Had lost my life. Sardanapalus holds her
Far dearer than his kingdom, yet he fights
For that too; and can I do less than him,
Who never flesh'd a scimitar till now?

Myrrha, return, and I obey you, though
In disobedience to the monarch. [*Exit* PANIA.

Enter ALTADA, *and* SFERO *by an opposite door.*

ALTADA.

Myrrha!
What, gone? yet she was here when the fight raged,
And Pania also. Can aught have befallen them?

SFERO.

I saw both safe, when late the rebels fled:
They probably are but retired to make
Their way back to the harem.

ALTADA.

If the king
Prove victor, as it seems even now he must,
And miss his own Ionian, we are doom'd
To worse than captive rebels.

SFERO.

Let us trace them;
She cannot be fled far; and, found, she makes
A richer prize to our soft sovereign
Than his recover'd kingdom.

ALTADA.

Baal himself
Ne'er fought more fiercely to win empire, than

His silken son to save it : he defies
All augury of foes or friends ; and like
The close and sultry summer's day, which bodes
A twilight tempest, bursts forth in such thunder
As sweeps the air and deluges the earth.
The man's inscrutable.

SFERO.

Not more than others.
All are the sons of circumstance ; away—
Let's seek the slave out, or prepare to be
Tortured for his infatuation, and
Condemn'd without a crime. [*Exeunt.*

Enter SALEMENES *and Soldiers, etc.*

SALEMENES.

The triumph is
Flattering : they are beaten backward from the palace,
And we have open'd regular access
To the troops station'd on the other side
Euphrates, who may still be true ; nay, must be,
When they hear of our victory. But where
Is the chief victor? where's the king?

Enter SARDANAPALUS, *cum suis, etc. and* MYRRHA.

SARDANAPALUS.

Here, brother.

SALEMENES.

Unhurt, I hope.

SARDANAPALUS.

Not quite; but let it pass.
We've clear'd the palace——

SALEMENES.

And, I trust, the city.
Our numbers gather; and I have order'd onward
A cloud of Parthians, hitherto reserved,
All fresh and fiery, to be pour'd upon them
In their retreat, which soon will be a flight.

SARDANAPALUS.

It is already, or at least they march'd
Faster than I could follow with my Bactrians,
Who spared no speed. I am spent; give me a seat.

SALEMENES.

There stands the throne, sire.

SARDANAPALUS.

'Tis no place to rest on,

For mind nor body: let me have a couch,
[*They place a seat.*
A peasant's stool, I care not what: so—now
I breathe more freely.

SALEMENES.

This great hour has proved
The brightest and most glorious of your life.

SARDANAPALUS.

And the most tiresome. Where's my cup-bearer?
Bring me some water.

SALEMENES (*smiling*).

'Tis the first time he
Ever had such an order: even I,
Your most austere of counsellors, would now
Suggest a purpler beverage.

SARDANAPALUS.

Blood—doubtless.
But there's enough of that shed; as for wine,
I have learn'd to-night the price of the pure element:
Thrice have I drank of it, and thrice renew'd,
With greater strength than the grape ever gave me,
My charge upon the rebels. Where's the soldier
Who gave me water in his helmet?

ONE OF THE GUARDS.

Slain, sire!
An arrow pierced his brain, while, scattering
The last drops from his helm, he stood in act
To place it on his brows.

SARDANAPALUS.

Slain! unrewarded!
And slain to serve my thirst: that's hard, poor
slave!
Had he but lived, I would have gorged him with
Gold: all the gold of earth could ne'er repay
The pleasure of that draught; for I was parch'd
As I am now. [*They bring water—he drinks.*
I live again—from henceforth
The goblet I reserve for hours of love,
But war on water.

SALEMENES.

And that bandage, sire,
Which girds your arm?

SARDANAPALUS.

A scratch from brave Beleses.

MYRRHA.

Oh! he is wounded!

SARDANAPALUS.

Not too much of that ;
And yet it feels a little stiff and painful,
Now I am cooler.

MYRRHA.

You have bound it with——

SARDANAPALUS.

The fillet of my diadem : the first time
That ornament was ever aught to me
Save an incumbrance.

MYRRHA (*to the attendants*).

Summon speedily
A leech of the most skilful : pray, retire ;
I will unbind your wound and tend it.

SARDANAPALUS.

Do so,
For now it throbs sufficiently : but what
Know'st thou of wounds? yet wherefore do I
ask.
Know'st thou, my brother, where I lighted on
This minion ?

SALEMENES.

Herding with the other females,
Like frighten'd antelopes.

SARDANAPALUS.

No: like the dam
Of the young lion, femininely raging,
(And femininely meaneth furiously,
Because all passions in excess are female,)
Against the hunter flying with her cub,
She urged on with her voice and gesture, and
Her floating hair and flashing eyes, the soldiers
In the pursuit.

SALEMENES.

Indeed!

SARDANAPALUS.

You see, this night
Made warriors of more than me. I paused
To look upon her, and her kindled cheek;
Her large black eyes, that flash'd through her long hair
As it stream'd o'er her; her blue veins that rose
Along her most transparent brow; her nostril
Dilated from its symmetry; her lips
Apart; her voice that clove through all the din,
As a lute's pierceth through the cymbal's clash,
Jarr'd but not drown'd by the loud brattling; her

Waved arms, more dazzling with their own born
whiteness
Than the steel her hand held, which she caught
up
From a dead soldier's grasp ; all these things made
Her seem unto the troops a prophetess
Of victory, or Victory herself,
Come down to hail us hers.

SALEMENES (*aside*).

This is too much :
Again the love-fit's on him, and all's lost,
Unless we turn his thoughts.

(*Aloud.*) But pray thee, sire,
Think of your wound—you said even now 'twas
painful.

SARDANAPALUS.

That's true, too ; but I must not think of it.

SALEMENES.

I have look'd to all things needful, and will now
Receive reports of progress made in such
Orders as I had given, and then return
To hear your further pleasure.

SARDANAPALUS.

Be it so.

SALEMENES (*in retiring*).

Myrrha!

MYRRHA.

Prince.

SALEMENES.

You have shown a soul to-night,
Which, were he not my sister's lord——But now
I have no time: thou lov'st the king?

MYRRHA.

I love
Sardanapalus.

SALEMENES.

But wouldst have him king still?

MYRRHA.

I would not have him less than what he should be.

SALEMENES.

Well, then, to have him king, and yours, and all
He should, or should not be; to have him *live*,
Let him not sink back into luxury.
You have more power upon his spirit than
Wisdom within these walls, or fierce rebellion
Raging without: look well that he relapse not.

MYRRHA.

There needed not the voice of Salemenes

To urge me on to this: I will not fail.
All that a woman's weakness can——

SALEMENES.

Is power
Omnipotent o'er such a heart as his;
Exert it wisely. [*Exit* SALEMENES.

SARDANAPALUS.

Myrrha! what, at whispers
With my stern brother? I shall soon be jealous.

MYRRHA (*smiling*).

You have cause, sire; for on the earth there breathes not
A man more worthy of a woman's love—
A soldier's trust—a subject's reverence—
A king's esteem—the whole world's admiration!

SARDANAPALUS.

Praise him, but not so warmly. I must not
Hear those sweet lips grow eloquent in aught
That throws me into shade; yet you speak truth.

MYRRHA.

And now retire, to have your wound look'd to.
Pray lean on me.

SARDANAPALUS.

Yes, love! but not from pain.
[*Exeunt omnes.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

SARDANAPALUS *discovered sleeping upon a couch, and occasionally disturbed in his slumbers, with* MYRRHA *watching.*

MYRRHA (*sola, gazing*).

I have stolen upon his rest, if rest it be,
Which thus convulses slumber: shall I wake him?
No, he seems calmer. Oh, thou God of Quiet!
Whose reign is o'er seal'd eyelids and soft dreams,
Or deep, deep sleep, so as to be unfathom'd,
Look like thy brother, Death—so still—so stir-
less—
For then we are happiest, as it may be, we
Are happiest of all within the realm
Of thy stern, silent, and unwakening twin.
Again he moves—again the play of pain
Shoots o'er his features, as the sudden gust
Crisps the reluctant lake that lay so calm
Beneath the mountain shadow; or the blast
Ruffles the autumn leaves, that drooping cling

Faintly and motionless to their loved boughs.
I must awake him—yet not yet: who knows
From what I rouse him? It seems pain; but if
I quicken him to heavier pain? The fever
Of this tumultuous night, the grief too of
His wound, though slight, may cause all this, and
shake
Me more to see than him to suffer. No:
Let Nature use her own maternal means,—
And I await to second not disturb her.

SARDANAPALUS (*awakening*).

Not so—although ye multiplied the stars,
And gave them to me as a realm to share
From you and with you! I would not so purchase
The empire of eternity.—Hence—hence—
Old hunter of the earliest brutes! and ye,
Who hunted fellow-creatures as if brutes;
Once bloody mortals—and now bloodier idols,
If your priests lie not! And thou, ghastly beldame!
Dripping with dusky gore, and trampling on
The carcasses of Inde—away! away!
Where am I? Where the spectres? Where—— No—
that
Is no false phantom: I should know it 'midst

All that the dead dare gloomily raise up
From their black gulf to daunt the living. Myrrha!

MYRRHA.

Alas! thou art pale, and on thy brow the drops
Gather like night dew. My beloved, hush—
Calm thee. Thy speech seems of another world,
And thou art loved of this. Be of good cheer,
All will go well.

SARDANAPALUS.

Thy *hand*—so—'tis thy hand;
'Tis flesh; grasp—clasp—yet closer, till I feel
Myself that which I was.

MYRRHA.

At least know me
For what I am, and ever must be—thine.

SARDANAPALUS.

I know it now. I know this life again.
Ah, Myrrha! I have been where we shall be.

MYRRHA.

My lord!

SARDANAPALUS.

I've been i' the grave—where worms are lords,
And kings are——But I did not deem it so;
I thought 'twas nothing.

MYRRHA.

So it is; except
Unto the timid, who anticipate
That which may never be.

SARDANAPALUS.

Oh, Myrrha! if
Sleep shows such things, what may not death disclose?

MYRRHA.

I know no evil death can show, which life
Has not already shown to those who live
Embodied longest. If there be indeed
A shore, where mind survives, 'twill be as mind,
All unincorporate: or if there flits
A shadow of this cumbrous clog of clay,
Which stalks, methinks, between our souls and heaven,
And fetters us to earth—at least the phantom,
Whate'er it have to fear, will not fear death.

SARDANAPALUS.

I fear it not; but I have felt—have seen—
A legion of the dead.

MYRRHA.

And so have I.

The dust we tread upon was once alive,
And wretched. But proceed : what hast thou seen?
Speak it, 'twill lighten thy dimm'd mind.

SARDANAPALUS.

Methought——

MYRRHA.

Yet pause, thou art tired—in pain—exhausted ; all
Which can impair both strengh and spirit : seek
Rather to sleep again.

SARDANAPALUS.

Not now—I would not
Dream ; though I know it now to be a dream
What I have dreamt :—and canst thou bear to hear
it?

MYRRHA.

I can bear all things, dreams of life or death,
Which I participate with you, in semblance
Or full reality.

SARDANAPALUS.

And this look'd real,
I tell you : after that these eyes were open,
I saw them in their flight—for then they fled.

MYRRHA.

Say on.

SARDANAPALUS.

I saw, that is, I dream'd myself
Here—here—even where we are, guests as we were,
Myself a host that deem'd himself but guest,
Willing to equal all in social freedom;
But, on my right hand and my left, instead
Of thee and Zames, and our custom'd meeting,
Was ranged on my left hand a haughty, dark,
And deadly face—I could not recognize it,
Yet I had seen it, though I knew not where;
The features were a giant's, and the eye
Was still, yet lighted; his long locks curl'd down
On his vast bust, whence a huge quiver rose
With shaft-heads feather'd from the eagle's wing,
That peep'd up bristling through his serpent hair.
I invited him to fill the cup which stood
Between us, but he answer'd not—I fill'd it—
He took it not, but stared upon me, till
I trembled at the fix'd glare of his eye:
I frown'd upon him as a king should frown—
He frown'd not in his turn, but look'd upon me
With the same aspect, which appall'd me more,
Because it changed not, and I turn'd for refuge

To milder guests, and sought them on the right,
Where thou were wont to be. But——

[*He pauses.*

MYRRHA.

What instead?

SARDANAPALUS.

In thy own chair—thy own place in the banquet—
I sought thy sweet face in the circle—but
Instead—a gray-hair'd, wither'd, bloody-eyed,
And bloody-handed, ghastly, ghostly thing,
Female in garb, and crown'd upon the brow,
Furrow'd with years, yet sneering with the passion
Of vengeance, leering too with that of lust,
Sate:—my veins curdled.

MYRRHA.

Is this all?

SARDANAPALUS.

Upon
Her right hand—her lank, bird-like right hand—
stood
A goblet, bubbling o'er with blood; and on
Her left, another, fill'd with—what I saw not,
But turn'd from it and her. But all along

The table sate a range of crowned wretches,
Of various aspects, but of one expression.

MYRRHA.

And felt you not this a mere vision?

SARDANAPALUS.

No;
It was so palpable, I could have touch'd them.
I turn'd from one face to another, in
The hope to find at last one which I knew
Ere I saw theirs: but no—all turn'd upon me,
And stared, but neither ate nor drank, but stared,
Till I grew stone, as they seem'd half to be,
Yet breathing stone, for I felt life in them,
And life in me: there was a horrid kind
Of sympathy between us, as if they
Had lost a part of death to come to me,
And I the half of life to sit by them.
We were in an existence all apart
From heaven or earth——And rather let me see
Death all than such a being!

MYRRHA.

And the end?

SARDANAPALUS.

At last I sate marble as they, when rose

The hunter, and the crew; and smiling on me—
Yes, the enlarged but noble aspect of
The hunter smiled upon me—I should say,
His lips, for his eyes moved not—and the woman's
Thin lips relax'd to something like a smile.
Both rose, and the crown'd figures on each hand
Rose also, as if aping their chief shades—
Mere mimics even in death—but I sate still:
A desperate courage crept through every limb,
And at the last I fear'd them not; but laugh'd
Full in their phantom faces. But then—then
The hunter laid his hand on mine: I took it,
And grasp'd it—but it melted from my own.
While he too vanish'd, and left nothing but
The memory of a hero, for he look'd so.

MYRRHA.

And was; the ancestors of heroes, too,
And thine no less.

SARDANAPALUS.

Ay, Myrrha, but the woman,
The female who remain'd, she flew upon me,
And burnt my lips up with her noisome kisses,
And, flinging down the goblets on each hand,
Methought their poisons flow'd around us, till

Each form'd a hideous river. Still she clung;
The other phantoms, like a row of statues,
Stood dull as in our temples, but she still
Embraced me, while I shrunk from her, as if,
In lieu of her remote descendant, I
Had been the son who slew her for her incest.
Then—then—a chaos of all loathsome things
Throng'd thick and shapeless: I was dead, yet feel-
ing—
Buried, and raised again—consumed by worms,
Purged by the flames, and wither'd in the air!
I can fix nothing further of my thoughts,
Save that I long'd for thee, and sought for thee.
In all these agonies, and woke and found thee.

MYRRHA.

So shalt thou find me ever at thy side,
Here and hereafter, if the last may be.
But think not of these things—the mere creations
Of late events acting upon a frame
Unused to toil, yet over-wrought by toil
Such as might try the sternest.

SARDANAPALUS.

I am better.

Now that I see *thee once* more, *what was seen*
Seems nothing.

Enter SALEMENES.

SALEMENES.

Is the king so soon awake?

SARDANAPALUS.

Yes, brother, and I would I had not slept;
For all the predecessors of our line
Rose up, methought, to drag me down to them.
My father was amongst them, too; but he,
I know not why, kept from me, leaving me
Between the hunter-founder of our race,
And her, the homicide and husband-killer,
Whom you call glorious.

SALEMENES.

So I term you also,
Now you have shown a spirit like to hers.
By day-break I propose that we set forth,
And charge once more the rebel crew, who still
Keep gathering head, repulsed, but not quite
quell'd.

SARDANAPALUS.

How wears the night?

SALEMENES.

There yet remain some hours
Of darkness: use them for your further rest.

SARDANAPALUS.

No, not to-night, if 'tis not gone: methought
I pass'd hours in that vision.

MYRRHA.

Scarcely one;
I watch'd by you: it was a heavy hour,
But an hour only.

SARDANAPALUS.

Let us then hold council;
To-morrow we set forth.

SALEMENES.

But ere that time,
I had a grace to seek.

SARDANAPALUS.

'Tis granted.

SALEMENES.

Hear it
Ere you reply too readily; and 'tis
For *your* ear only.

MYRRHA.

Prince, I take my leave.

[*Exit* MYRRHA.

SALEMENES.

That slave deserves her freedom.

SARDANAPALUS.

Freedom only?

That slave deserves to share a throne.

SALEMENES.

Your patience—

'Tis not yet vacant, and 'tis of its partner
I come to speak with you.

SARDANAPALUS.

How! of the queen?

SALEMENES.

Even so. I judged it fitting for their safety,
That, ere the dawn, she sets forth with her children
For Paphlagonia, where our kinsman Cotta
Governs; and there at all events secure
My nephews and your sons their lives, and with them
Their just pretensions to the crown, in case——

SARDANAPALUS.

I perish—as is probable: well thought—
Let them set forth with a sure escort.

SALEMENES.

That
Is all provided, and the galley ready
To drop down the Euphrates; but ere they
Depart, will you not see——

SARDANAPALUS.

My sons? It may
Unman my heart, and the poor boys will weep;
And what can I reply to comfort them,
Save with some hollow hopes, and ill-worn smiles?
You know I cannot feign.

SALEMENES.

But you can feel;
At least, I trust so: in a word, the queen
Requests to see you ere you part—for ever.

SARDANAPALUS.

Unto what end? what purpose? I will grant
Aught—all that she can ask—but such a meeting.

SALEMENES.

You know, or ought to know, enough of women,
Since you have studied them so steadily,

That what they ask in aught that touches on
The heart, is dearer to their feelings or
Their fancy, than the whole external world.
I think as you do of my sister's wish;
But 'twas her wish—she is my sister—you
Her husband—will you grant it?

SARDANAPALUS.

'Twill be useless:
But let her come.

SALEMENES.

I go. [*Exit* SALEMENES.

SARDANAPALUS.

We have lived asunder
Too long to meet again—and *now* to meet!
Have I not cares enow, and pangs enow,
To bear alone, that we must mingle sorrows,
Who have ceased to mingle love?

Re-enter SALEMENES *and* ZARINA.

SALEMENES.

My sister! courage:
Shame not our blood with trembling, but re-
member

From whence we sprung. The queen is present,
 sire.

ZARINA.

I pray thee, brother, leave me.

SALEMENES.

Since you ask it.
[*Exit* SALEMENES.

ZARINA.

Alone with him! How many a year has past,
Though we are still so young, since we have met,
Which I have worn in widowhood of heart.
He loved me not: yet he seems little changed—
Changed to me only—would the change were
 mutual!
He speaks not—scarce regards me—not a word—
Nor look—yet he *was* soft of voice and aspect,
Indifferent, not austere. My lord!

SARDANAPALUS.

Zarina!

ZARINA.

No, *not* Zarina—do not say Zarina.
That tone—that word—annihilate long years,
And things which make them longer.

SARDANAPALUS.

'Tis too late
To think of these past dreams. Let's not re-
proach—
That is, reproach me not—for the *last* time——

ZARINA.

And *first*. I ne'er reproach'd you.

SARDANAPALUS.

'Tis most true;
And that reproof comes heavier on my heart
Than——But our hearts are not in our own power.

ZARINA.

Nor hands; but I gave both.

SARDANAPALUS.

Your brother said,
It was your will to see me, ere you went
From Nineveh with——(*He hesitates.*)

ZARINA.

Our children: it is true.
I wish'd to thank you that you have not divided
My heart from all that's left it now to love—
Those who are yours and mine, who look like you,
And look upon me as you look'd upon me
Once——But they have not changed.

SARDANAPALUS.

Nor ever will.
I fain would have them dutiful.

ZARINA.

I cherish
Those infants, not alone from the blind love
Of a fond mother, but as a fond woman.
They are now the only tie between us.

SARDANAPALUS.

Deem not
I have not done you justice: rather make them
Resemble your own line, than their own sire.
I trust them with you—to you: fit them for
A throne, or, if that be denied——You have heard
Of this night's tumults?

ZARINA.

I had half forgotten,
And could have welcomed any grief, save yours,
Which gave me to behold your face again.

SARDANAPALUS.

The throne—I say it not in fear—but 'tis
In peril; they perhaps may never mount it:
But let them not for this lose sight of it.
I will dare all things to bequeath it them;

But if I fail, then they must win it back
Bravely—and, won, wear it wisely, not as I
Have wasted down my royalty.

ZARINA.

They ne'er
Shall know from me of aught but what may honour
Their father's memory.

SARDANAPALUS.

Rather let them hear
The truth from you than from a trampling world.
If they be in adversity, they'll learn
Too soon the scorn of crowds for crownless princes,
And find that all their father's sins are theirs.
My boys!—I could have borne it were I childless.

ZARINA.

Oh! do not say so—do not poison all
My peace left, by unwishing that thou wert
A father. If thou conquerest, they shall reign,
And honour him who saved the realm for them,
So little cared for as his own; and if——

SARDANAPALUS.

'Tis lost, all earth will cry out thank your father!
And they will swell the echo with a curse.

ZARINA.

That they shall never do; but rather honour
The name of him, who, dying like a king,
In his last hours did more for his own memory,
Than many monarchs in a length of days,
Which date the flight of time, but make no
annals.

SARDANAPALUS.

Our annals draw perchance unto their close;
But at the least, whate'er the past, their end
Shall be like their beginning—memorable.

ZARINA.

Yet, be not rash—be careful of your life,
Live but for those who love.

SARDANAPALUS.

And who are they?
A slave, who loves from passion—I'll not say
Ambition—she has seen thrones shake, and loves;
A few friends, who have revell'd till we are
As one, for they are nothing if I fall;
A brother I have injured—children whom
I have neglected, and a spouse——

ZARINA.

Who loves.

SARDANAPALUS.

And pardons?

ZARINA.

I have never thought of this,
And cannot pardon till I have condemn'd.

SARDANAPALUS.

My wife!

ZARINA.

Now blessings on thee for that word!
I never thought to hear it more—from thee.

SARDANAPALUS.

Oh! thou wilt hear it from my subjects. Yes—
These slaves, whom I have nurtured, pamper'd, fed,
And swoln with peace, and gorged with plenty, till
They reign themselves—all monarchs in their mansions—
Now swarm forth in rebellion, and demand
His death, who made their lives a jubilee;
While the few upon whom I have no claim
Are faithful! This is true, yet monstrous.

ZARINA.

'Tis

Perhaps too natural; for benefits
Turn poison in bad minds.

SARDANAPALUS.

And good ones make
Good out of evil. Happier than the bee,
Which hives not but from wholesome flowers.

ZARINA.

Then reap
The honey, nor inquire whence 'tis derived.
Be satisfied—you are not all abandon'd.

SARDANAPALUS.

My life insures me that. How long, bethink you,
Were not I yet a king, should I be mortal;
That is, where mortals *are*, not where they must
be?

ZARINA.

I know not. But yet live for my—that is,
Your children's sake!

SARDANAPALUS.

My gentle, wrong'd Zarina!
I am the very slave of circumstance
And impulse—borne away with every breath!
Misplaced upon the throne—misplaced in life.
I know not what I could have been, but feel

I am not what I should be—let it end.
But take this with thee: if I was not form'd
To prize a love like thine, a mind like thine,
Nor dote even on thy beauty—as I've doted
On lesser charms, for no cause save that such
Devotion was a duty, and I hated
All that look'd like a chain for me or others
(This even rebellion must avouch); yet hear
These words, perhaps among my last—that none
Ere valued more thy virtues, though he knew not
To profit by them—as the miner lights
Upon a vein of virgin ore, discovering
That which avails him nothing: he hath found it,
But 'tis not his—but some superior's, who
Placed him to dig, but not divide the wealth
Which sparkles at his feet; nor dare he lift
Nor poise it, but must grovel on upturning
The sullen earth.

ZARINA.

Oh! if thou hast at length
Discover'd that my love is worth esteem,
I ask no more—but let us hence together,
And *I*—let me say *we*—shall yet be happy.
Assyria is not all the earth—we'll find

A world out of our own—and be more blest
Than I have ever been, or thou, with all
An empire to indulge thee.

Enter SALEMENES.

SALEMENES.

I must part ye—
The moments, which must not be lost, are passing.

ZARINA.

Inhuman brother! wilt thou thus weigh out
Instants so high and blest?

SALEMENES.

Blest!

ZARINA.

He hath been
So gentle with me that I cannot think
Of quitting.

SALEMENES.

So—this feminine farewell
Ends as such partings end, in *no* departure.
I thought as much, and yielded against all
My better bodings. But it must not be.

ZARINA.

Not be?

SALEMENES.

Remain, and perish——

ZARINA.

With my husband——

SALEMENES.

And children.

ZARINA.

Alas!

SALEMENES.

Hear me, sister, like
My sister:—all's prepared to make your safety
Certain, and of the boys too, our last hopes.
'Tis not a single question of mere feeling,
Though that were much—but 'tis a point of state:
The rebels would do more to seize upon
The offspring of their sovereign, and so crush——

ZARINA.

Ah! do not name it.

SALEMENES.

Well, then, mark me: when
They are safe beyond the Median's grasp, the rebels
Have miss'd their chief aim—the extinction of

The line of Nimrod. Though the present king
Fall, his sons live for victory and vengeance.

ZARINA.

But could not I remain, alone?

SALEMENES.

What! leave
Your children, with two parents and yet orphans—
In a strange land—so young, so distant?

ZARINA.

No—
My heart will break.

SALEMENES.

Now you know all--decide.

SARDANAPALUS.

Zarina, he hath spoken well, and we
Must yield awhile to this necessity.
Remaining here, you may lose all; departing,
You save the better part of what is left
To both of us, and to such loyal hearts
As yet beat in these kingdoms.

SALEMENES.

The time presses.

SARDANAPALUS

Go, then. If e'er we meet again, perhaps
I may be worthier of you—and, if not,

Remember that my faults, though not atoned for,
Are *ended*. Yet, I dread thy nature will
Grieve more above the blighted name and ashes
Which once were mightiest in Assyria—than——
But I grow womanish again, and must not;
I must learn sternness now. My sins have all
Been of the softer order——*hide* thy tears—
I do not bid thee *not* to shed them—'twere
Easier to stop Euphrates at its source
Than one tear of a true and tender heart—
But let me not behold them; they unman me
Here when I had re-mann'd myself. My brother,
Lead her away.

ZARINA.

Oh, God! I never shall
Behold him more!

SALEMENES (*striving to conduct her*).

Nay, sister, I *must* be obey'd.

ZARINA.

I must remain—away! you shall not hold me.
What, shall he die alone?—*I* live alone?

SALEMENES.

He shall *not die alone*; but lonely you
Have lived for years.

ZARINA.

That's false! I knew *he* lived,
And lived upon his image—let me go!

SALEMENES (*conducting her off the stage*).

Nay, then, I must use some fraternal force,
Which you will pardon.

ZARINA.

Never. Help me! Oh!
Sardanapalus, wilt thou thus behold me
Torn from thee?

SALEMENES.

Nay—then all is lost again,
If that this moment is not gain'd.

ZARINA.

My brain turns—
My eyes fail—where is he? [*She faints.*

SARDANAPALUS (*advancing*).

No—set her down—
She's dead—and you have slain her.

SALEMENES.

'Tis the mere
Faintness of o'er-wrought passion: in the air
She will recover. Pray, keep back.—[*Aside.*] I must

Avail myself of this sole moment to
Bear her to where her children are embark'd,
I' the royal galley on the river.

[SALEMENES *bears her off.*

SARDANAPALUS (*solus*).

This, too—
And this too must I suffer—I, who never
Inflicted purposely on human hearts
A voluntary pang! But that is false—
She loved me, and I loved her. Fatal passion!
Why dost thou not expire *at once* in hearts
Which thou hast lighted up at once? Zarina!
I must pay dearly for the desolation
Now brought upon thee. Had I never loved
But thee, I should have been an unopposed
Monarch of honouring nations. To what gulphs
A single deviation from the track
Of human duties leads even those who claim
The homage of mankind as their born due,
And find it, till they forfeit it themselves!

Enter MYRRHA.

SARDANAPALUS.

You here! Who call'd you?

MYRRHA.

No one—but I heard
Far off a voice of wail and lamentation,
And thought——.

SARDANAPALUS.

It forms no portion of your duties
To enter here till sought for.

MYRRHA.

Though I might,
Perhaps, recal some softer words of yours
(Although they *too were chiding*), which reproved
me,
Because I ever dreaded to intrude;
Resisting my own wish and your injunction
To heed no time nor presence, but approach you
Uncall'd for: I retire.

SARDANAPALUS.

Yet, stay—being here.
I pray you pardon me: events have sour'd me
Till I wax peevish—heed it not: I shall
Soon be myself again.

MYRRHA.

I wait with patience,
What I shall see with pleasure.

SARDANAPALUS.

Scarce a moment
Before your entrance in this hall, Zarina,
Queen of Assyria, departed hence.

MYRRHA.

Ah!

SARDANAPALUS.

Wherefore do you start?

MYRRHA.

Did I do so?

SARDANAPALUS.

'Twas well you enter'd by another portal,
Else you had met. That pang at least is spared
her!

MYRRHA.

I know to feel for her.

SARDANAPALUS.

That is too much,
And beyond nature—'tis nor mutual,
Nor possible. You cannot pity her,
Nor she aught but——

MYRRHA.

Despise the favorite slave?
Not more than I have ever scorn'd myself.

SARDANAPALUS.

Scorn'd! what, to be the envy of your sex,
And lord it o'er the heart of the world's lord?

MYRRHA.

Were you the lord of twice ten thousand worlds—
As you are like to lose the one you sway'd—
I did abase myself as much in being
Your paramour, as though you were a peasant—
Nay, more, if that the peasant were a Greek.

SARDANAPALUS.

You talk it well——

MYRRHA.

And truly.

SARDANAPALUS.

In the hour
Of man's adversity all things grow daring
Against the falling; but as I am not
Quite fallen, nor now disposed to bear reproaches,
Perhaps because I merit them too often,
Let us then part while peace is still between us.

MYRRHA.

Part!

SARDANAPALUS.

Have not all past human beings parted,
And must not all the present one day part?

MYRRHA.

Why?

SARDANAPALUS.

For your safety, which I will have look'd to,
With a strong escort to your native land;
And such gifts, as, if you have not been all
A queen, shall make your dowry worth a kingdom.

MYRRHA.

I pray you talk not thus.

SARDANAPALUS.

The queen is gone:
You need not shame to follow. I would fall
Alone—I seek no partners but in pleasure.

MYRRHA.

And I no pleasure but in parting not.
You shall not force me from you.

SARDANAPALUS.

Think well of it—
It soon may be too late.

MYRRHA.

So let it be;
For then you cannot separate me from you.

SARDANAPALUS.

And will not; but I thought you wish'd it.

MYRRHA.

I!

SARDANAPALUS.

You spoke of your abasement.

MYRRHA.

And I feel it
Deeply—more deeply than all things but love.

SARDANAPALUS.

Then fly from it.

MYRRHA.

'Twill not recal the past—
'Twill not restore my honour, nor my heart.
No—here I stand or fall. If that you conquer,
I live to joy in your great triumph; should
Your lot be different, I'll not weep, but share it.
You did not doubt me a few hours ago.

SARDANAPALUS.

Your courage never—nor your love till now;
And none could make me doubt it save yourself.
Those words——

MYRRHA

Were words. I pray you, let the proofs
Be in the past acts you were pleased to praise

This very night, and in my further bearing,
Beside, wherever you are borne by fate.

SARDANAPALUS.

I am content; and, trusting in my cause,
Think we may yet be victors, and return
To peace—the only victory I covet.
To me war is no glory—conquest no
Renown. To be forced thus to uphold my right,
Sits heavier on my heart than all the wrongs
These men would bow me down with. Never, never
Can I forget this night, even should I live
To add it to the memory of others.
I thought to have made mine inoffensive rule
An era of sweet peace 'midst bloody annals,
A green spot amidst desert centuries,
On which the future would turn back and smile,
And cultivate, or sigh when it could not
Recal Sardanapalus' golden reign.
I thought to have made my realm a paradise,
And every moon an epoch of new pleasures.
I took the rabble's shouts for love—the breath
Of friends for truth—the lips of woman for

My only guerdon—so they are, my Myrrha:

[*He kisses her.*

Kiss me. Now let them take my realm and life!
They shall have both, but never thee!

MYRRHA.

No, never!

Man may despoil his brother man of all
That's great or glittering: kingdoms fall—hosts yield—
Friends fail—slaves fly—and all betray—and, more
Than all, the most indebted—but a heart
That loves without self-love! 'Tis here—now prove it.

Enter SALEMENES.

SALEMENES.

I sought you.—How! *she* here again?

SARDANAPALUS.

Return not
Now to reproof: methinks your aspect speaks
Of higher matter than a woman's presence.

SALEMENES.

The only woman whom it much imports me

At such a moment now is safe in absence—
The queen's embark'd.

SARDANAPALUS.

And well? say that much.

SALEMENES.

Yes.
Her transient weakness has past o'er; at least,
It settled into tearless silence: her
Pale face and glittering eye, after a glance
Upon her sleeping children, were still fix'd
Upon the palace towers as the swift galley
Stole down the hurrying stream beneath the star-
light;
But she said nothing.

SARDANAPALUS.

Would I felt no more
Than she has said.

SALEMENES.

'Tis now too late to feel!
Your feelings cannot cancel a sole pang;
To change them, my advices bring sure tidings
That the rebellious Medes and Chaldees, marshall'd
By their two leaders, are already up
In arms again; and, serrying their ranks,

Prepare to attack: they have apparently
Been join'd by other satraps.

SARDANAPALUS.

What! more rebels?
Let us be first, then.

SALEMENES.

That were hardly prudent
Now, though it was our first intention. If
By noon to-morrow we are join'd by those
I've sent for by sure messengers, we shall be
In strength enough to venture an attack,
Ay, and pursuit too; but till then, my voice
Is to await the onset.

SARDANAPALUS.

I detest
That waiting; though it seems so safe to fight
Behind high walls, and hurl down foes into
Deep fosses, or behold them sprawl on spikes
Strew'd to receive them, still I like it not—
My soul seems lukewarm; but when I set on them,
Though they were piled on mountains, I would
have
A pluck at them, or perish in hot blood!—
Let me then charge!

SALEMENES.

You talk like a young soldier.

SARDANAPALUS.

I am no soldier, but a man: speak not
Of soldiership, I loathe the word, and those
Who pride themselves upon it; but direct me
Where I may pour upon them.

SALEMENES.

You must spare
To expose your life too hastily; 'tis not
Like mine or any other subject's breath:
The whole war turns upon it—with it; this
Alone creates it, kindles, and may quench it—
Prolong it—end it.

SARDANAPALUS.

Then let us end both!
'Twere better thus, perhaps, than prolong either;
I'm sick of one, perchance of both.

[*A trumpet sounds without.*

SALEMENES.

Hark!

SARDANAPALUS.

Let us
Reply, not listen.

SALEMENES.

And your wound?

SARDANAPALUS.

'Tis bound—
'Tis heal'd—I had forgotten it. Away!
A leech's lancet would have scratch'd me deeper;
The slave that gave it might be well ashamed
To have struck so weakly.

SALEMENES.

Now, may none this hour
Strike with a better aim!

SARDANAPALUS.

Ay, if we conquer;
But if not, they will only leave to me
A task they might have spared their king. Upon
them! [*Trumpet sounds again.*

SALEMENES.

I am with you.

SARDANAPALUS.

Ho, my arms! again, my arms!
[*Exeunt.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.

The same Hall of the Palace.

MYRRHA *and* BALEA.

MYRRHA (*at a window*).

The day at last has broken. What a night
Hath usher'd it! How beautiful in heaven!
Though varied with a transitory storm,
More beautiful in that variety!
How hideous upon earth! where peace and hope,
And love and revel, in an hour were trampled
By human passions to a human chaos,
Not yet resolved to separate elements.—
'Tis warring still! And can the sun so rise,
So bright, so rolling back the clouds into
Vapours more lovely than the unclouded sky,
With golden pinnacles, and snowy mountains,
And billows purpler than the ocean's, making
In heaven a glorious mockery of the earth,
So like, we almost deem it permanent;

So fleeting, we can scarcely call it aught
Beyond a vision, 'tis so transiently
Scatter'd along the eternal vault: and yet
It dwells upon the soul, and soothes the soul,
And blends itself into the soul, until
Sunrise and sunset form the haunted epoch
Of sorrow and of love; which they who mark not,
Know not the realms where those twin genii
(Who chasten and who purify our hearts,
So that we would not change their sweet rebukes
For all the boisterous joys that ever shook
The air with clamour) build the palaces
Where their fond votaries repose and breathe
Briefly;—but in that brief cool calm inhale
Enough of heaven to enable them to bear
The rest of common, heavy, human hours,
And dream them through in placid sufferance;
Though seemingly employed like all the rest
Of toiling breathers in allotted tasks
Of pain or pleasure, *two* names for *one* feeling,
Which our internal, restless agony
Would vary in the sound, although the sense
Escapes our highest efforts to be happy.

BALEA.

You muse right calmly: and can you so watch
The sunrise which may be our last?

MYRRHA.

It is
Therefore that I so watch it, and reproach
Those eyes, which never may behold it more,
For having looked upon it oft, too oft,
Without the reverence and the rapture due
To that which keeps all earth from being as fragile
As I am in this form. Come, look upon it,
The Chaldee's god, which, when I gaze upon,
I grow almost a convert to your Baal.

BALEA.

As now he reigns in heaven, so once on earth
He sway'd.

MYRRHA.

He sways it now far more, then; never
Had earthly monarch half the peace and glory
Which centres in a single ray of his.

BALEA.

Surely he is a god!

MYRRHA.

So we Greeks deem too;

And yet I sometimes think that gorgeous orb
Must rather be the abode of gods than one
Of the immortal sovereigns. Now he breaks
Through all the clouds, and fills my eyes with light
That shuts the world out. I can look no more.

BALEA.

Hark! heard you not a sound?

MYRRHA.

No, 'twas mere fancy;
They battle it beyond the wall, and not
As in late midnight conflict in the very
Chambers: the palace has become a fortress
Since that insidious hour; and here within
The very centre, girded by vast courts
And regal halls of pyramid proportions,
Which must be carried one by one before
They penetrate to where they then arrived,
We are as much shut in even from the sound
Of peril as from glory.

BALEA.

But they reach'd
Thus far before.

MYRRHA.

Yes, by surprise, and were
Beat back by valour; now at once we have
Courage and vigilance to guard us.

BALEA.

May they
Prosper!

MYRRHA.

That is the prayer of many, and
The dread of more: it is an anxious hour;
I strive to keep it from my thoughts. Alas!
How vainly!

BALEA.

It is said the king's demeanour
In the late action scarcely more appall'd
The rebels than astonish'd his true subjects.

MYRRHA.

'Tis easy to astonish or appal
The vulgar mass which moulds a horde of slaves:
But he did bravely.

BALEA.

Slew he not Beleses?
I heard the soldiers say he struck him down.

MYRRHA.

The wretch was overthrown, but rescued to
Triumph, perhaps, o'er one who vanquish'd him
In fight, as he had spared him in his peril,
And by that heedless pity risk'd a crown.

BALEA.

Hark!

MYRRHA.

You are right; some steps approach, but slowly.

Enter Soldiers, bearing in SALEMENES *wounded, with a broken Javelin in his Side; they seat him upon one of the Couches which furnish the Apartment.*

MYRRHA.

Oh, Jove!

BALEA.

Then all is over.

SALEMENES.

That is false.
Hew down the slave who says so, if a soldier.

MYRRHA.

Spare him—he's none: a mere court butterfly,
That flutters in the pageant of a monarch.

SALEMENES.

Let him live on, then.

MYRRHA.

So wilt thou, I trust.

SALEMENES.

I fain would live this hour out, and the event,
But doubt it. Wherefore did ye bear me here?

SOLDIER.

By the king's order. When the javelin struck you,
You fell and fainted; 'twas his strict command
To bear you to this hall.

SALEMENES.

'Twas not ill done:
For, seeming slain in that cold dizzy trance,
The sight might shake our soldiers—but—'tis vain.
I feel it ebbing!

MYRRHA.

Let me see the wound;
I am not quite skilless: in my native land
'Tis part of our instruction. War being constant,
We are nerved to look on such things.

SOLDIER.

Best extract
The javelin.

MYRRHA.

Hold! no, no, it cannot be.

SALEMENES.

I am sped, then!

MYRRHA.

With the blood that fast must follow
The extracted weapon, I do fear thy life.

SALEMENES.

And I *not* death. Where was the king when you
Convey'd me from the spot where I was stricken?

SOLDIER.

Upon the same ground, and encouraging
With voice and gesture the dispirited troops
Who had seen you fall, and falter'd back.

SALEMENES.

Whom heard ye
Named next to the command?

SOLDIER.

I did not hear.

SALEMENES.

Fly, then, and tell him, 'twas my last request
That Zames take my post until the junction,
So hoped for, yet delay'd, of Ofratanes,

Satrap of Susa. Leave me here: our troops
Are not so numerous as to spare your absence.

SOLDIER.

But, prince——

SALEMENES.

Hence, I say! Here's a courtier and
A woman, the best chamber company.
As you would not permit me to expire
Upon the field, I'll have no idle soldiers
About my sick couch. Hence! and do my bidding!
[*Exeunt the Soldiers.*

MYRRHA.

Gallant and glorious spirit! must the earth
So soon resign thee?

SALEMENES.

Gentle Myrrha, 'tis
The end I would have chosen, had I saved
The monarch or the monarchy by this;
As 'tis, I have not outlived them.

MYRRHA.

You wax paler.

SALEMENES.

Your hand; this broken weapon but prolongs
My pangs, without sustaining life enough

To make me useful: I would draw it forth
And my life with it, could I but hear how
The fight goes.

Enter SARDANAPALUS *and Soldiers.*

SARDANAPALUS.

My best brother!

SALEMENES.

And the battle
Is lost?

SARDANAPALUS (*despondingly*).

You see *me here.*

SALEMENES.

I'd rather see you *thus!*

[*He draws out the weapon from the wound, and dies.*

SARDANAPALUS.

And *thus* I will be seen; unless the succour,
The last frail reed of our beleaguer'd hopes,
Arrive with Ofratanes.

MYRRHA.

Did you not
Receive a token from your dying brother,
Appointing Zames chief?

SARDANAPALUS.

I did.

MYRRHA.

Where's Zames?

SARDANAPALUS.

Dead.

MYRRHA.

And Altada?

SARDANAPALUS.

Dying.

MYRRHA.

Pania? Sfero?

SARDANAPALUS.

Pania yet lives; but Sfero's fled, or captive.
I am alone.

MYRRHA.

And is all lost?

SARDANAPALUS.

Our walls,
Though thinly mann'd, may still hold out against
Their present force, or aught save treachery:
But i' the field——

MYRRHA.

I thought 'twas the intent

Of Salemenes not to risk a sally
'Till ye were strengthen'd by the expected succours.

SARDANAPALUS.

I over-ruled him.

MYRRHA.

Well, the fault's a brave one.

SARDANAPALUS.

But fatal. Oh, my brother! I would give
These realms, of which thou wert the ornament,
The sword and shield, the sole-redeeming honour,
To call back——But I will not weep for thee;
Thou shalt be mourn'd for as thou wouldst be mourn'd.
It grieves me most that thou couldst quit this life
Believing that I could survive what thou
Hast died for—our long royalty of race.
If I redeem it, I will give thee blood
Of thousands, tears of millions, for atonement
(The tears of all the good are thine already).
If not, we meet again soon, if the spirit
Within us lives beyond:—thou readest mine,
And dost me justice now. Let me once clasp
That yet warm hand, and fold that throbless heart [*Embraces the body.*

To this which beats so bitterly. Now, bear
The body hence.

SOLDIER.

Where?

SARDANAPALUS.

To my proper chamber.
Place it beneath my canopy, as though
The king lay there: when this is done, we will
Speak further of the rites due to such ashes.

[*Exeunt Soldiers with the body of* SALEMENES.

Enter PANIA.

SARDANAPALUS.

Well, Pania! have you placed the guards, and issued
The orders fix'd on?

PANIA.

Sire, I have obey'd.

SARDANAPALUS.

And do the soldiers keep their hearts up?

PANIA.

Sire?

SARDANAPALUS.

I'm answer'd! When a king asks twice, and has

A question as an answer to *his* question,
It is a portent. What, they are dishearten'd?

PANIA.

The death of Salemenes, and the shouts
Of the exulting rebels on his fall,
Have made them——

SARDANAPALUS.

Rage—not droop—it should have been.
We'll find the means to rouse them.

PANIA.

Such a loss
Might sadden even a victory.

SARDANAPALUS.

Alas!
Who can so feel it as I feel? but yet,
Though coop'd within these walls, they are strong, and we
Have those without will break their way through hosts,
To make their sovereign's dwelling what it was—
A palace; not a prison nor a fortress.

Enter an Officer, hastily.

SARDANAPALUS.

Thy face seems ominous. Speak!

OFFICER.

I dare not.

SARDANAPALUS.

Dare not?
While millions dare revolt with sword in hand!
That's strange. I pray thee break that loyal silence
Which loathes to shock its sovereign; we can hear
Worse than thou hast to tell.

PANIA.

Proceed, thou hearest.

OFFICER.

The wall which skirted near the river's brink
Is thrown down by the sudden inundation
Of the Euphrates, which now rolling, swoln
From the enormous mountains where it rises,
By the late rains of that tempestuous region,
O'erfloods its banks, and hath destroy'd the bulwark.

PANIA.

That's a black augury! it has been said
For ages, "That the city ne'er should yield
"To man, until the river grew its foe."

SARDANAPALUS.

I can forgive the omen, not the ravage.
How much is swept down of the wall?

OFFICER.

About
Some twenty stadii.

SARDANAPALUS.

And all this is left
Pervious to the assailants?

OFFICER.

For the present
The river's fury must impede the assault;
But when he shrinks into his wonted channel,
And may be crossed by the accustom'd barks,
The palace is their own.

SARDANAPALUS.

That shall be never.
Though men, and gods, and elements, and omens,
Have risen up 'gainst one who ne'er provoked them,
My fathers' house shall never be a cave
For wolves to horde and howl in.

PANIA.

With your sanction
I will proceed to the spot, and take such measures
For the assurance of the vacant space
As time and means permit.

SARDANAPALUS.

About it straight,
And bring me back, as speedily as full
And fair investigation may permit,
Report of the true state of this irruption
Of waters. [*Exeunt* PANIA *and the Officer.*

MYRRHA.

Thus the very waves rise up
Against you.

SARDANAPALUS.

They are not my subjects, girl,
And may be pardon'd, since they can't be punish'd.

MYRRHA.

I joy to see this portent shakes you not.

SARDANAPALUS.

I am past the fear of portents: they can tell me
Nothing I have not told myself since midnight:
Despair anticipates such things.

MYRRHA.

Despair!

SARDANAPALUS.

No; not despair precisely. When we know
All that can come, and how to meet it, our
Resolves, if firm, may merit a more noble

Word than this is to give it utterance.
But what are words to us? we have well nigh done
With them and all things.

MYRRHA.

Save *one deed*—the last
And greatest to all mortals; crowning act
Of all that was—or is—or is to be—
The only thing common to all mankind,
So different in their births, tongues, sexes, natures,
Hues, features, climes, times, feelings, intellects,
Without one point of union save in this,
To which we tend, for which we're born, and thread
The labyrinth of mystery, call'd life.

SARDANAPALUS.

Our clew being well nigh wound out, let's be cheerful.
They who have nothing more to fear may well
Indulge a smile at that which once appall'd;
As children at discover'd bugbears.

Re-enter PANIA.

PANIA.

'Tis

As was reported: I have order'd there
A double guard, withdrawing from the wall
Where it was strongest the required addition
To watch the breach occasion'd by the waters.

SARDANAPALUS.

You have done your duty faithfully, and as
My worthy Pania! further ties between us
Draw near a close. I pray you take this key:

[*Gives a key.*

It opens to a secret chamber, placed
Behind the couch in my own chamber. (Now.
Press'd by a nobler weight than e'er it bore—
Though a long line of sovereigns have lain down
Along its golden frame—as bearing for
A time what late was Salemenes). Search
The secret covert to which this will lead you;
'Tis full of treasure; take it for yourself
And your companions: there's enough to load ye,
Though ye be many. Let the slaves be freed, too;
And all the inmates of the palace, of
Whatever sex, now quit it in an hour.
Thence launch the regal barks, once form'd for pleasure,
And now to serve for safety, and embark.

The river's broad and swoln, and uncommanded
(More potent than a king) by these besiegers.
Fly! and be happy!

PANIA.

Under your protection!
So you accompany your faithful guard.

SARDANAPALUS.

No, Pania! that must not be; get thee hence,
And leave me to my fate.

PANIA.

'Tis the first time
I ever disobey'd: but now——

SARDANAPALUS.

So all men
Dare beard me now, and Insolence within
Apes Treason from without. Question no further;
'Tis my command, my last command. Wilt *thou*
Oppose it? *thou!*

PANIA.

But yet—not yet.

SARDANAPALUS.

Well, then,
Swear that you will obey when I shall give
The signal.

PANIA.

With a heavy but true heart,
I promise.

SARDANAPALUS.

'Tis enough. Now order here
Faggots, pine-nuts, and wither'd leaves, and such
Things as catch fire and blaze with one sole spark;
Bring cedar, too, and precious drugs, and spices,
And mighty planks, to nourish a tall pile;
Bring frankincense and myrrh, too, for it is
For a great sacrifice I build the pyre;
And heap them round yon throne.

PANIA.

My lord!

SARDANAPALUS.

I have said it,
And *you* have *sworn*.

PANIA.

And could keep my faith
Without a vow. [*Exit* PANIA.

MYRRHA.

What mean you?

SARDANAPALUS.

You shall know
Anon—what the whole earth shall ne'er forget.

PANIA, *returning with a Herald.*

PANIA.

My king, in going forth upon my duty,
This herald has been brought before me, craving
An audience.

SARDANAPALUS.

Let him speak.

HERALD.

The *King* Arbaces——

SARDANAPALUS.

What, crown'd already?—But, proceed.

HERALD.

Beleses,
The anointed high-priest——

SARDANAPALUS.

Of what god, or demon?
With new kings rise new altars. But, proceed;
You are sent to prate your master's will, and not
Reply to mine.

HERALD.

And Satrap Ofratanes——

SARDANAPALUS.

Why, *he* is *ours*.

HERALD (*showing a ring*).

Be sure that he is now
In the camp of the conquerors; behold
His signet ring.

SARDANAPALUS.

'Tis his. A worthy triad!
Poor Salemenes! thou hast died in time
To see one treachery the less: this man
Was thy true friend and my most trusted subject.
Proceed.

HERALD.

They offer thee thy life, and freedom
Of choice to single out a residence
In any of the further provinces,
Guarded and watch'd, but not confined in person,
Where thou shalt pass thy days in peace; but on
Condition that the three young princes are
Given up as hostages.

SARDANAPALUS (*ironically*).

The generous victors!

HERALD.

I wait the answer.

SARDANAPALUS.

Answer, slave! How long
Have slaves decided on the doom of kings?

HERALD.

Since they were free.

SARDANAPALUS.

Mouthpiece of mutiny!
Thou at the least shalt learn the penalty
Of treason, though its proxy only. Pania!
Let his head be thrown from our walls within
The rebels' lines, his carcass down the river.
Away with him!

[PANIA *and the Guards seizing him.*

PANIA.

I never yet obey'd
Your orders with more pleasure than the present.
Hence with him, soldiers! do not soil this hall
Of royalty with treasonable gore;
Put him to rest without.

HERALD.

A single word:
My office, king, is sacred.

SARDANAPALUS.

And what's *mine?*
That thou shouldst come and dare to ask of me
To lay it down?

HERALD.

I but obey'd my orders,
At the same peril if refused, as now
Incurr'd by my obedience.

SARDANAPALUS.

So, there are
New monarchs of an hour's growth as despotic
As sovereigns swathed in purple, and enthroned
From birth to manhood!

HERALD.

My life waits your breath.
Yours (I speak humbly)—but it may be—yours
May also be in danger scarce less imminent:
Would it then suit the last hours of a line
Such as is that of Nimrod, to destroy
A peaceful herald, unarm'd, in his office;
And violate not only all that man
Holds sacred between man and man—but that
More holy tie which links us with the gods?

SARDANAPALUS.

He's right.—Let him go free.—My life's last act
Shall not be one of wrath. Here, fellow, take
[*Gives him a golden cup from a table near.*
This golden goblet, let it hold your wine,

And think of *me*; or melt it into ingots,
And think of nothing but their weight and value.

HERALD.

I thank you doubly for my life, and this
Most gorgeous gift, which renders it more precious.
But must I bear no answer?

SARDANAPALUS.

Yes,—I ask
An hour's truce to consider.

HERALD.

But an hour's?

SARDANAPALUS.

An hour's: if at the expiration of
That time your masters hear no further from me,
They are to deem that I reject their terms,
And act befittingly.

HERALD.

I shall not fail
To be a faithful legate of your pleasure.

SARDANAPALUS.

And, hark! a word more.

HERALD.

I shall not forget it,
Whate'er it be.

SARDANAPALUS.

Commend me to Beleses;
And tell him, ere a year expire, I summon
Him hence to meet me.

HERALD.

Where?

SARDANAPALUS.

At Babylon.
At least from thence he will depart to meet me.

HERALD.

I shall obey you to the letter. [*Exit Herald.*

SARDANAPALUS.

Pania!—
Now, my good Pania!—quick! with what I order'd.

PANIA.

My lord,—the soldiers are already charged.
And, see! they enter.

[*Soldiers enter, and form a Pile about the Throne, etc.*

SARDANAPALUS.

Higher, my good soldiers,
And thicker yet; and see that the foundation
Be such as will not speedily exhaust
Its own too subtle flame; nor yet be quench'd

With aught officious aid would bring to quell it.
Let the throne form the *core* of it; I would not
Leave that, save fraught with fire unquenchable,
To the new comers. Frame the whole as if
'Twere to enkindle the strong tower of our
Inveterate enemies. Now it bears an aspect!
How say you, Pania, will this pile suffice
For a king's obsequies?

PANIA.

Ay, for a kingdom's.
I understand you now.

SARDANAPALUS.

And blame me?

PANIA.

No—
Let me but fire the pile and share it with you.

MYRRHA.

That duty's mine.

PANIA.

A woman's!

MYRRHA.

'Tis the soldier's
Part to die *for* his sovereign, and why not
The woman's with her lover?

PANIA.

'Tis most strange!

MYRRHA.

But not so rare, my Pania, as thou think'st it.
In the mean time, live thou.—Farewell! the pile
Is ready.

PANIA.

I should shame to leave my sovereign
With but a single female to partake
His death.

SARDANAPALUS.

Too many far have heralded
Me to the dust already. Get thee hence;
Enrich thee.

PANIA.

And live wretched!

SARDANAPALUS.

Think upon
Thy vow;—'tis sacred and irrevocable.

PANIA.

Since it is so, farewell.

SARDANAPALUS.

Search well my chamber,
Feel no remorse at bearing off the gold;

Remember, what you leave you leave the slaves
Who slew me: and when you have borne away
All safe off to your boats, blow one long blast
Upon the trumpet as you quit the palace.
The river's brink is too remote, its stream
Too loud at present to permit the echo
To reach distinctly from its banks. Then fly,—
And as you sail turn back; but still keep on
Your way along the Euphrates: if you reach
The land of Paphlagonia, where the queen
Is safe with my three sons in Cotta's court,
Say what you *saw* at parting, and request
That she remember what I *said* at one
Parting more mournful still.

PANIA.

That royal hand!
Let me then once more press it to my lips;
And these poor soldiers who throng round you, and
Would fain die with you!

[*The Soldiers and* PANIA *throng round him, kissing his hand and the hem of his robe.*

SARDANAPALUS.

My best! my last friends!

Let's not unman each other—part at once :
All farewells should be sudden, when for ever,
Else they make an eternity of moments,
And clog the last sad sands of life with tears.
Hence, and be happy : trust me, I am not
Now to be pitied , or far more for what
Is past than present ;—for the future, 'tis
In the hands of the deities, if such
There be : I shall know soon. Farewell—farewell

[*Exeunt* PANIA *and the Soldiers*.

MYRRHA.

These men were honest : it is comfort still
That our last looks shall be on loving faces.

SARDANAPALUS.

And *lovely* ones, my beautiful !—but hear me !
If at this moment, for we now are on
The brink, thou feel'st an inward shrinking from
This leap through flame into the future, say it :
I shall not love thee less ; nay, perhaps more,
For yielding to thy nature : and there's time
Yet for thee to escape hence.

MYRRHA.

Shall I light
One of the torches which lie heap'd beneath

The ever–burning lamp that burns without,
Before Baal's shrine, in the adjoining hall?

SARDANAPALUS.

Do so. Is that thy answer?

MYRRHA.

Thou shalt see.

[*Exit* MYRRHA.

SARDANAPALUS (*solus*).

She's firm. My fathers! whom I will rejoin,
It may be, purified by death from some
Of the gross stains of too material being,
I would not leave your ancient first abode
To the defilement of usurping bondmen;
If I have not kept your inheritance
As ye bequeath'd it, this bright part of it,
Your treasure, your abode, your sacred relics
Of arms, and records, monuments, and spoils,
In which *they* would have revell'd, I bear with me
To you in that absorbing element,
Which most personifies the soul as leaving
The least of matter uncomsumed before
Its fiery workings:—and the light of this
Most royal of funereal pyres shall be
Not a mere pillar form'd of cloud and flame,

A beacon in the horizon for a day,
And then a mount of ashes, but a light
To lesson ages, rebel nations, and
Voluptuous princes. Time shall quench full many
A people's records, and a hero's acts;
Sweep empire after empire, like this first
Of empires, into nothing; but even then
Shall spare this deed of mine, and hold it up
A problem few dare imitate, and none
Despise—but, it may be, avoid the life
Which led to such a consummation.

MYRRHA *returns with a lighted Torch in her Hand, and a Cup in the other.*

MYRRHA.

Lo!
I've lit the lamp which lights us to the stars.

SARDANAPALUS.

And the cup?

MYRRHA.

'Tis my country's custom to
Make a libation to the gods.

SARDANAPALUS.

And mine

To make libations amongst men. I've not
Forgot the custom, and although alone,
Will drain one draught in memory of many
A joyous banquet past.

[SARDANAPALUS *takes the cup, and after drinking and tinkling the reversed cup, as a drop falls, exclaims—*

And this libation
Is for the excellent Beleses.

MYRRHA.

Why
Dwells thy mind rather upon that man's name
Than on his mate's in villany?

SARDANAPALUS.

The other
Is a mere soldier, a mere tool, a kind
Of human sword in a friend's hand; the other
Is master-mover of his warlike puppet;
But I dismiss them from my mind.—Yet pause,
My Myrrha! dost thou truly follow me,
Freely and fearlessly?

MYRRHA.

And dost thou think

A Greek girl dare not do for love, that which
An Indian widow braves for custom?

SARDANAPALUS.

Then
We but await the signal.

MYRRHA.

It is long
In sounding.

SARDANAPALUS.

Now, farewell; one last embrace.

MYRRHA.

Embrace, but *not* the last; there is one more.

SARDANAPALUS.

True, the commingling fire will mix our ashes.

MYRRHA.

And pure as is my love to thee, shall they,
Purged from the dross of earth, and earthly passion,
Mix pale with thine. A single thought yet irks me.

SARDANAPALUS.

Say it.

MYRRHA.

It is that no kind hand will gather
The dust of both into one urn.

SARDANAPALUS.

The better:
Rather let them be borne abroad upon
The winds of heaven, and scatter'd into air,
Than be polluted more by human hands
Of slaves and traitors; in this blazing palace,
And its enormous walls of reeking ruin,
We leave a nobler monument than Egypt
Hath piled in her brick mountains, o'er dead kings,
Or *kine*, for none know whether those proud piles
Be for their monarch, or their ox-god Apis:
So much for monuments that have forgotten
Their very record!

MYRRHA.

Then farewell, thou earth!
And loveliest spot of earth! farewell Ionia!
Be thou still free and beautiful, and far
Aloof from desolation! My last prayer
Was for thee, my last thoughts, save *one*, were of
thee!

SARDANAPALUS.

And that?

MYRRHA.

Is yours.

[*The trumpet of* PANIA *sounds without.*

SARDANAPALUS.

Hark!

MYRRHA.

Now!

SARDANAPALUS.

Adieu, Assyria!
I loved thee well, my own, my fathers' land,
And better as my country than my kingdom.
I satiated thee with peace and joys; and this
Is my reward! and now I owe thee nothing,
Not even a grave. [*He mounts the pile.*
Now, Myrrha!

MYRRHA.

Art thou ready?

SARDANAPALUS.

As the torch in thy grasp.

[MYRRHA *fires the pile.*

MYRRHA.

'Tis fired! I come.

[*As* MYRRHA *springs forward to throw herself into the flames, the Curtain falls.*

NOTES.

NOTE 1.

And thou, my own Ionian Myrrha.

Page 8, line 11

"The Ionian name had been still more comprehensive, having included the Achaians and the Bœotians, who, together with those to whom it was afterwards confined, would make nearly the whole of the Greek nation, and among the orientals it was always the general name for the Greeks."—*Mitford's Greece*, vol. i. p. 199.

NOTE 2.

——— "*Sardanapalus*
"*The king, and son of Anacyndaraxes,*
"*In one day built Anchialus and Tarsus.*
"*Eat, drink, and love, the rest's not worth a fillip.*"

Page 24, line 12

"For this expedition he took only a small chosen body of the phalanx, but all his light troops. In the first day's march he reached Anchialus, a town said to have been founded by the king of Assyria, Sardanapalus. The fortifications, in their magnitude and extent, still

in Arrian's time, bore the character of greatness, which the Assyrians appear singularly to have affected in works of the kind. A monument representing Sardanapalus was found there, warranted by an inscription in Assyrian characters, of course in the old Assyrian language, which the Greeks, whether well or ill, interpreted thus: "Sardanapalus, son of Anacyndaraxes, in one day founded Anchialus and Tarsus. Eat, drink, play: all other human joys are not worth a fillip." Supposing this version nearly exact (for Arrian says it was not quite so), whether the purpose has not been to invite to civil order a people disposed to turbulence, rather than to recommend immoderate luxury, may perhaps reasonably be questioned. What, indeed, could be the object of a king of Assyria in founding such towns in a country so distant from his capital, and so divided from it by an immense extent of sandy deserts and lofty mountains, and, still more, how the inhabitants could be at once in circumstances to abandon themselves to the intemperate joys which their prince has been supposed to have recommended, is not obvious; but it may deserve observation that, in that line of coast, the southern of Lesser Asia, ruins of cities, evidently of an age after Alexander, yet barely named in history, at this day astonish the adventurous traveller by their magnificence and elegance. Amid the desolation which, under a singularly barbarian government, has for so many centuries been daily spreading in the finest countries of the globe, whether more from soil and climate, or from opportunities for commerce, extraordinary means must have been found for communities to flourish there, whence it may seem that the measures of Sardanapalus were directed by juster views

than have been commonly ascribed to him; but that monarch having been the last of a dynasty, ended by a revolution, obloquy on his memory would follow of course from the policy of his successors and their partisans.

"The inconsistency of traditions concerning Sardanapalus is striking in Diodorus's account of him."—*Mitford's Greece*, vol. ix. pp. 311, 312, and 313.

THE TWO FOSCARI,

AN HISTORICAL TRAGEDY.

The *father* softens, but the *governor's* resolved.

CRITIC.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

Francis Foscari, Doge of Venice.

Jacopo Foscari, Son of the Doge.

James Loredano, a Patrician.

Marco Memmo, a Chief of the Forty.

Barbarigo, a Senator.

Other Senators, the Council of Ten, Guards, Attendants, etc. etc.

WOMAN.

Marina, Wife of young Foscari.

Scene—the Ducal Palace, Venice.

THE

TWO FOSCARI.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

A Hall in the Ducal Palace.

Enter LOREDANO *and* BARBARIGO, *meeting.*

LOREDANO.

WHERE is the prisoner?

BARBARIGO.

Reposing from
The Question.

LOREDANO.

The hour's past—fix'd yesterday
For the resumption of his trial.—Let us
Rejoin our colleagues in the council, and
Urge his recal.

BARBARIGO.

Nay, let him profit by
A few brief minutes for his tortured limbs;
He was o'erwrought by the Question yesterday,
And may die under it if now repeated.

LOREDANO.

Well?

BARBARIGO.

I yield not to you in love of justice,
Or hate of the ambitious Foscari,
Father and son, and all their noxious race,
But the poor wretch has suffer'd beyond nature's
Most stoical endurance.

LOREDANO.

Without owning
His crime.

BARBARIGO.

Perhaps without committing any.
But he avow'd the letter to the Duke
Of Milan, and his sufferings half atone for
Such weakness.

LOREDANO.

We shall see.

BARBARIGO.

You, Loredano,
Pursue hereditary hate too far.

LOREDANO.

How far?

BARBARIGO.

To extermination.

LOREDANO.

When they are
met, you may say this.—Let's in to council.

BARBARIGO.

Yet pause—the number of our colleagues is not
Complete yet: two are wanting ere we can
Proceed.

LOREDANO.

And the chief judge, the Doge?

BARBARIGO.

No—he
With more than Roman fortitude is ever
First at the board in this unhappy process
Against his last and only son.

LOREDANO.

True—true—
His *last*.

BARBARIGO.

Will nothing move you?

LOREDANO.

Feels he, think you?

BARBARIGO.

He shows it not.

LOREDANO.

I have mark'd *that*—the wretch!

BARBARIGO.

But yesterday, I hear, on his return
To the ducal chambers, as he pass'd the threshold
The old man fainted.

LOREDANO.

It begins to work, then.

BARBARIGO.

The work is half your own.

LOREDANO.

And should be *all* mine—
My father and my uncle are no more.

BARBARIGO.

I have read their epitaph, which says they died
By poison.

LOREDANO.

When the Doge declared that he

Should never deem himself a sovereign till
The death of Peter Loredano, both
The brothers sicken'd shortly :—he *is* sovereign.

BARBARIGO.

A wretched one.

LOREDANO.

What should they be who make
Orphans?

BARBARIGO.

But *did* the Doge make you so?

LOREDANO.

Yes.

BARBARIGO.

What solid proofs?

LOREDANO.

When princes set themselves
To work in secret, proofs and process are
Alike made difficult; but I have such
Of the first, as shall make the second needless.

BARBARIGO.

But you will move by law?

LOREDANO.

By all the laws
Which he would leave us.

BARBARIGO.

They are such in this
Our state as render retribution easier
Than 'mongst remoter nations. Is it true
That you have written in your books of commerce
(The wealthy practice of our highest nobles),
" Doge Foscari, my debtor for the deaths
" Of Marco and Pietro Loredano,
" My sire and uncle?"

LOREDANO.

It is written thus

BARBARIGO.

And will you leave it unerased ?

LOREDANO.

Till balanced.

BARBARIGO.

And how?

(Two Senators pass over the stage, as in their way to " the Hall of the Council of Ten."

LOREDANO.

You see the number is complete.
Follow me. [*Exit* LOREDANO.

BARBARIGO (*solus*).

Follow *thee!* I have follow'd long

Thy path of desolation, as the wave
Sweeps after that before it, alike whelming
The wreck that creaks to the wild winds, and
wretch
Who shrieks within its riven ribs, as gush
The waters through them; but this son and sire
Might move the elements to pause, and yet
Must I on hardily like them—Oh! would
I could as blindly and remorselessly!—
Lo, where he comes!—Be still, my heart! they are
Thy foes, must be thy victims: wilt thou beat
For those who almost broke thee?

Enter Guards, with young FOSCARI *as prisoner, etc.*

GUARD

Let him rest.
Signor, take time.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

I thank thee, friend; I'm feeble;
But thou may'st stand reproved.

GUARD.

I'll stand the hazard.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

That's kind:—I meet some pity, but no mercy;
This is the first.

GUARD.

And might be last, did they
Who rule behold us.

BARBARIGO (*advancing to the guard*).

There is one who does:
Yet fear not; I will neither be thy judge
Nor thy accuser; though the hour is past,
Wait their last summons—I am of "the Ten,"
And waiting for that summons sanction you
Even by my presence: when the last call sounds,
We'll in together.—Look well to the prisoner!

JACOPO FOSCARI.

What voice is that?—'tis Barbarigo's! Ah!
Our house's foe, and one of my few judges

BARBARIGO.

To balance such a foe, if such there be,
Thy father sits amongst thy judges.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

True,
He judges.

BARBARIGO.

Then deem not the laws too harsh
Which yield so much indulgence to a sire
As to allow his voice in such high matter
As the state's safety——

JACOPO FOSCARI.

And his son's. I'm faint,
Let me approach, I pray you, for a breath
Of air, yon window which o'erlooks the waters

Enter an Officer, who whispers BARBARIGO.

BARBARIGO (*to the Guard*).

Let him approach. I must not speak with him
Further than thus; I have transgress'd my duty
In this brief parley, and must now redeem it
Within the Council Chamber.

[*Exit* BARBARIGO

[*Guard conducting* JACOPO FOSCARI *to the window*.

GUARD.

There, sir, 'tis
Open—How feel you?

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Like a boy—Oh Venice!

GUARD.

And your limbs?

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Limbs! how often have they borne me
Bounding o'er yon blue tide, as I have skimm'd
The gondola along in childish race,

And, masqued as a young gondolier, amidst
My gay competitors, noble as I,
Raced for our pleasure in the pride of strength,
While the fair populace of crowding beauties,
Plebeian as patrician, cheer'd us on
With dazzling smiles, and wishes audible,
And waving kerchiefs, and applauding hands,
Even to the goal!—How many a time have I
Cloven with arm still lustier, breast more daring,
The wave all roughen'd; with a swimmer's stroke
Flinging the billows back from my drench'd hair,
And laughing from my lip the audacious brine,
Which kiss'd it like a wine-cup, rising o'er
The waves as they arose, and prouder still
The loftier they uplifted me; and oft,
In wantonness of spirit, plunging down
Into their green and glassy gulfs, and making
My way to shells and sea-weed, all unseen
By those above, till they wax'd fearful; then
Returning with my grasp full of such tokens
As show'd that I had search'd the deep: exulting,
With a far-dashing stroke, and drawing deep
The long-suspended breath, again I spurn'd

The foam which broke around me, and pursued
My track like a sea-bird.—I was a boy then.

GUARD.

Be a man now: there never was more need
Of manhood's strength.

JACOPO FOSCARI (*looking from the lattice*).

My beautiful, my own,
My only Venice—*this is breath!* Thy breeze,
Thine Adrian sea-breeze, how it fans my face!
Thy very winds feel native to my veins,
And cool them into calmness! How unlike
The hot gales of the horrid Cyclades,
Which howl'd about my Candiote dungeon, and
Made my heart sick.

GUARD.

I see the colour comes
Back to your cheek: Heaven send you strength to bear
What more may be imposed!—I dread to think on't.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

They will not banish me again?—No—no,
Let them wring on; I am strong yet.

GUARD.

Confess,

And the rack will be spared you.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

I confess'd

Once—twice before: both times they exiled me.

GUARD.

And the third time will slay you.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Let them do so,

So I be buried in my birth-place; better

Be ashes here than aught that lives elsewhere.

GUARD.

And can you so much love the soil which hates
you?

JACOPO FOSCARI.

The soil!—Oh no, it is the seed of the soil

Which persecutes me; but my native earth

Will take me as a mother to her arms.

I ask no more than a Venetian grave,

A dungeon, what they will, so it be here.

Enter an Officer.

OFFICER.

Bring in the prisoner!

GUARD.

Signor, you hear the order.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Ay, I am used to such a summons; 'tis
The third time they have tortured me:—then lend me
Thine arm. [*To the Guard.*

OFFICER.

Take mine, sir; 'tis my duty to
Be nearest to your person.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

You!—you are he
Who yesterday presided o'er my pangs—
Away!—I'll walk alone.

OFFICER.

As you please, signor.
The sentence was not of my signing, but
I dared not disobey the Council when
They——

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Bade thee stretch me on their horrid engine.
I pray thee touch me not—that is, just now;
The time will come they will renew that order.
But keep off from me till 'tis issued. As

I look upon thy hands my curdling limbs
Quiver with the anticipated wrenching,
And the cold drops strain through my brow as
if——
But onward—I have borne it—I can bear it —
How looks my father?

OFFICER.

With his wonted aspect.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

So does the earth, and sky, the blue of ocean,
The brightness of our city, and her domes,
The mirth of her Piazza, even now
Its merry hum of nations pierces here,
Even here, into these chambers of the unknown
Who govern, and the unknown and the unnum-
ber'd
Judged and destroy'd in silence,—all things wear
The self-same aspect, to my very sire!
Nothing can sympathize with Foscari,
Not even a Foscari.—Sir, I attend you.

[*Exeunt* JACOPO FOSCARI, *Officer*, *etc*

Enter MEMMO *and another Senator*.

MEMMO.

He's gone—we are too late:—think you "the Ten"
Will sit for any length of time to-day?

SENATOR.

They say the prisoner is most obdurate,
Persisting in his first avowal; but
More I know not.

MEMMO.

And that is much, the secrets
Of yon terrific chamber are as hidden
From us, the premier nobles of the state,
As from the people.

SENATOR.

Save the wonted rumours,
Which (like the tales of spectres that are rife
Near ruin'd buildings) never have been proved,
Nor wholly disbelieved: men know as little
Of the state's real acts as of the grave's
Unfathom'd mysteries.

MEMMO.

But with length of time
We gain a step in knowledge, and I look
Forward to be one day of the decemvirs.

SENATOR.

Or Doge?

MEMMO.

Why, no, not if I can avoid it

SENATOR.

'Tis the first station of the state, and may
Be lawfully desired, and lawfully
Attain'd by noble aspirants.

MEMMO.

To such
I leave it; though born noble, my ambition
Is limited: I'd rather be an unit
Of an united and imperial "Ten,"
Than shine a lonely, though a gilded cipher.—
Whom have we here? the wife of Foscari?

Enter MARINA *with a female attendant.*

MARINA.

What, no one?—I am wrong, there still are two,
But they are senators.

MEMMO.

Most noble lady,
Command us.

MARINA.

I command!—Alas! my life
Has been one long entreaty, and a vain one.

MEMMO.

I understand thee, but I must not answer.

MARINA (*fiercely*).

True—none dare answer here save on the rack,
Or question save those——

MEMMO (*interrupting her*).

High-born dame! bethink thee
Where thou now art.

MARINA.

Where I now am!—It was
My husband's father's palace.

MEMMO

The Duke's palace.

MARINA.

And his son's prison;—true, I have not forgot it;
And if there were no other nearer, bitterer
Remembrances, would thank the illustrious
Memmo
For pointing out the pleasures of the place.

MEMMO.

Be calm!

MARINA (*looking up towards heaven*).

I am; but oh, thou eternal God!
Canst *thou* continue so, with such a world?

MEMMO.

Thy husband yet may be absolved.

MARINA.

He is,
In heaven. I pray you signor senator,
Speak not of that; you are a man of office,
So is the Doge; he has a son at stake,
Now, at this moment, and I have a husband,
Or had: they are there within, or were at least
An hour since, face to face, as judge and culprit:
Will *he* condemn *him*?

MEMMO.

I trust not.

MARINA.

But if
He does not, there are those will sentence both.

MEMMO.

They can.

MARINA.

And with them power and will are one
In wickedness:—my husband's lost!

MEMMO.

Not so,
Justice is judge in Venice.

MARINA.

If it were so
There now would be no Venice. But let it
Live on, so the good die not, till the hour
Of nature's summons; but "the Ten's" is quicker,
And we must wait on't. Ah! a voice of wail!

[*A faint cry within.*

SENATOR.

Hark!

MEMMO.

'Twas a cry of—

MARINA.

No, no; not my husband's—
Not Foscari's.

MEMMO.

The voice was—

MARINA.

Not his: no.
He shriek! No; that should be his father's part,
Not his—not his—he'll die in silence.

[*A faint groan again within.*

MEMMO.

What!
Again?

MARINA.

His voice! it seem'd so: I will not
Believe it. Should he shrink, I cannot cease
To love; but—no—no—no—it must have been
A fearful pang which wrung a groan from him.

SENATOR.

And feeling for thy husband's wrongs, wouldst thou
Have him bear more than mortal pain, in silence?

MARINA.

We all must bear our tortures. I have not
Left barren the great house of Foscari,
Though they sweep both the Doge and son from life;
I have endured as much in giving life
To those who will succeed them, as they can
In leaving it: but mine were joyful pangs;
And yet they wrung me till I *could* have shriek'd,
But did not, for my hope was to bring forth
Heroes, and would not welcome them with tears.

MEMMO.

All's silent now.

MARINA.

Perhaps all's over; but
I will not deem it: he hath nerved himself,
And now defies them.

Enter an Officer hastily.

MEMMO.

How now, friend, what seek you?

OFFICER.

A leech. The prisoner has fainted.

[*Exit Officer.*

MEMMO.

Lady,
'Twere better to retire.

SENATOR (*offering to assist her*).

I pray thee do so.

MARINA.

Off! *I* will tend him.

MEMMO.

You! Remember, lady!
Ingress is given to none within those chambers,
Except "the Ten," and their familiars.

MARINA.

Well,
I know that none who enter there return
As they have enter'd—many never; but
They shall not balk my entrance.

MEMMO.

Alas! this
Is but to expose yourself to harsh repulse,
And worse suspense.

MARINA.

Who shall oppose me?

MEMMO.

They
Whose duty 'tis to do so.

MARINA.

'Tis *their* duty
To trample on all human feelings, all
Ties which bind man to man, to emulate
The fiends, who will one day requite them in
Variety of torturing! Yet I'll pass.

MEMMO.

It is impossible.

MARINA.

That shall be tried.

Despair defies even despotism: there is
That in my heart would make its way through
hosts
With levell'd spears; and think you a few jailors
Shall put me from my path? Give me, then, way,
This is the Doge's palace; I am wife
Of the Duke's son, the *innocent* Duke's son,
And they shall hear this!

MEMMO.

It will only serve
More to exasperate his judges.

MARINA.

What
Are *judges* who give way to anger? they
Who do so are assassins. Give me way.

[*Exit* MARINA.

SENATOR.

Poor lady!

MEMMO.

'Tis mere desperation; she
Will not be admitted o'er the threshold.

SENATOR.

And

Even if she be so, cannot save her husband.
But, see, the officer returns.

The officer passes over the stage with another person.

MEMMO.

I hardly
Thought that the Ten had even this touch of pity,
Or would permit assistance to this sufferer

SENATOR.

Pity! Is 't pity to recal to feeling
The wretch too happy to escape to death
By the compassionate trance, poor nature's last
Resource against the tyranny of pain?

MEMMO.

I marvel they condemn him not at once.

SENATOR.

That's not their policy: they'd have him live,
Because he fears not death; and banish him,
Because all earth, except his native land,
To him is one wide prison, and each breath
Of foreign air he draws seems a slow poison,
Consuming but not killing.

MEMMO.

Circumstance
Confirms his crimes, but he avows them not.

SENATOR.

None, save the letter, which he says was written,
Address'd to Milan's duke, in the full knowledge
That it would fall into the senate's hands,
And thus he should be re-convey'd to Venice

MEMMO.

But as a culprit.

SENATOR.

Yes, but to his country:
And that was all he sought, so he avouches.

MEMMO.

The accusation of the bribes was proved.

SENATOR.

Not clearly, and the charge of homicide
Has been annull'd by the death-bed confession
Of Nicolas Erizzo, who slew the late
Chief of "the Ten."

MEMMO.

Then why not clear him?

SENATOR.

That

They ought to answer; for it is well known
That Almoro Donato, as I said,
Was slain by Erizzo for private vengeance.

MEMMO.

There must be more in this strange process than
The apparent crimes of the accused disclose—
But here come two of "the Ten;" let us retire.

[*Exeunt* MEMMO *and Senator*.

Enter LOREDANO *and* BARBARIGO.

BARBARIGO (*addressing* LOREDANO).

That were too much: believe me, 'twas not meet
The trial should go further at this moment.

LOREDANO.

And so the Council must break up, and Justice
Pause in her full career, because a woman
Breaks in on our deliberations?

BARBARIGO.

No,
That's not the cause; you saw the prisoner's state.

LOREDANO.

And had he not recover'd?

BARBARIGO.

To relapse
Upon the least renewal.

LOREDANO.

'Twas not tried.

BARBARIGO.

'Tis vain to murmur; the majority
In council were against you

LOREDANO.

Thanks to you, sir,
And the old ducal dotard, who combined
The worthy voices which o'erruled my own.

BARBARIGO.

I am a judge; but must confess that part
Of our stern duty, which prescribes the Question,
And bids us sit and see its sharp infliction,
Makes me wish——

LOREDANO.

What?

BARBARIGO.

That *You would sometimes* feel,
As I do always.

LOREDANO.

Go to, you're a child,
Infirm of feeling as of purpose, blown
About by every breath, shook by a sigh,
And melted by a tear—a precious judge

For Venice! and a worthy statesman to
Be partner in my policy!

BARBARIGO.

He shed
No tears.

LOREDANO.

He cried out twice.

BARBARIGO.

A saint had done so,
Even with the crown of glory in his eye,
At such inhuman artifice of pain
As was forced on him: but he did not cry
For pity; not a word nor groan escaped him,
And those two shrieks were not in supplication,
But wrung from pangs, and follow'd by no prayers.

LOREDANO.

He mutter'd many times between his teeth,
But inarticulately.

BARBARIGO.

That I heard not;
You stood more near him.

LOREDANO.

I did so.

BARBARIGO.

Methought,
To my surprise too, you were touch'd with mercy,
And were the first to call out for assistance
When he was failing.

LOREDANO.

I believed that swoon
His last.

BARBARIGO.

And have I not oft heard thee name
His and his father's death your nearest wish?

LOREDANO.

If he dies innocent, that is to say,
With his guilt unavow'd, he'll be lamented.

BARBARIGO.

What, wouldst thou slay his memory?

LOREDANO.

Wouldst thou have
His state descend to his children, as it must,
If he die unattainted?

BARBARIGO.

War with *them* too?

LOREDANO.

With all their house, till theirs or mine are nothing.

BARBARIGO.

And the deep agony of his pale wife,
And the repress'd convulsion of the high
And princely brow of his old father, which
Broke forth in a slight shuddering, though rarely,
Or in some clammy drops, soon wiped away
In stern serenity; these moved you not?

[*Exit* LOREDANO.

He's silent in his hate, as Foscari
Was in his suffering; and the poor wretch moved me
More by his silence than a thousand outcries
Could have effected. 'Twas a dreadful sight
When his distracted wife broke through into
The hall of our tribunal, and beheld
What we could scarcely look upon, long used
To such sights. I must think no more of this,
Lest I forget in this compassion for
Our foes their former injuries, and lose
The hold of vengeance Loredano plans
For him and me; but mine would be content

With—lesser retribution than he thirsts for,
And I would mitigate his deeper hatred
To milder thoughts; but, for the present, Foscari
Has a short hourly respite, granted at
The instance of the elders of the Council,
Moved doubtless by his wife's appearance in
The hall, and his own sufferings.—Lo! they come:
How feeble and forlorn! I cannot bear
To look on them again in this extremity:
I'll hence, and try to soften Loredano.

[*Exit* BARBARIGO.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

A Hall in the DOGE'S *Palace*

The DOGE *and a* SENATOR.

SENATOR.

Is it your pleasure to sign the report
Now, or postpone it till to-morrow?

DOGE.

Now;
I overlook'd it yesterday: it wants
Merely the signature. Give me the pen—
[*The* DOGE *sits down and signs the paper.*
There, signor.

SENATOR (*looking at the paper*).
You have forgot; it is not sign'd

DOGE.

Not sign'd? Ah, I perceive my eyes begin
To wax more weak with age. I did not see
That I had dipp'd the pen without effect.

SENATOR (*dipping the pen into the ink, and placing the paper before the* DOGE).

Your hand, too, shakes, my lord: allow me, thus—

DOGE.

'Tis done, I thank you.

SENATOR.

Thus the act confirm'd
By you and by "the Ten," gives peace to Venice.

DOGE.

'Tis long since she enjoy'd it: may it be
As long ere she resume her arms!

SENATOR.

'Tis almost
Thirty-four years of nearly ceaseless warfare
With the Turk, or the powers of Italy;
The state had need of some repose.

DOGE.

No doubt:
I found her queen of ocean, and I leave her
Lady of Lombardy: it is a comfort
That I have added to her diadem
The gems of Brescia and Ravenna; Crema
And Bergamo no less are hers; her realm

By land has grown by thus much in my reign,
While her sea-sway has not shrunk.

SENATOR.

'Tis most true,
And merits all our country's gratitude.

DOGE.

Perhaps so.

SENATOR.

Which should be made manifest.

DOGE.

I have not complain'd, sir.

SENATOR.

My good lord, forgive me.

DOGE.

For what?

SENATOR.

My heart bleeds for you.

DOGE.

For me, signor?

SENATOR.

And for your——

DOGE.

Stop!

SENATOR.

It must have way, my lord:
I have too many duties towards you
And all your house, for past and present kindness,
Not to feel deeply for your son.

DOGE.

Was this
In your commission?

SENATOR.

What my lord?

DOGE.

This prattle
Of things you know not: but the treaty's signed;
Return with it to them who sent you.

SENATOR.

I
Obey. I had in charge, too, from the Council
That you would fix an hour for their re-union.

DOGE.

Say, when they will—now, even at this moment,
If it so please them: I am the state's servant.

SENATOR.

They would accord some time for your repose.

DOGE.

I have no repose, that is, none which shall cause
The loss of an hour's time unto the state:
Let them meet when they will, I shall be found
Where I should be, and *what* I have been ever.

[*Exit* SENATOR.

[*The* DOGE *remains in silence.*

Enter an Attendant.

ATTENDANT.

Prince!

DOGE.

Say on.

ATTENDANT.

The illustrious lady Foscari
Requests an audience.

DOGE.

Bid her enter. Poor
Marina! [*Exit Attendant*

[*The* DOGE *remains in silence as before.*

Enter MARINA.

MARINA.

I have ventured, father, on
Your privacy.

DOGE.

I have none from you, my child.
Command my time, when not commanded by
The state.

MARINA.

I wish'd to speak to you of *him*.

DOGE.

Your husband?

MARINA.

And your son.

DOGE.

Proceed, my daughter!

MARINA.

I had obtained permission from "the Ten"
To attend my husband for a limited number
Of hours.

DOGE.

You had so.

MARINA.

'Tis revoked.

DOGE.

By whom?

MARINA.

"The Ten."—When we had reach'd "the Bridge
of Sighs,"

Which I prepared to pass with Foscari,
The gloomy guardian of that passage first
Demurr'd: a messenger was sent back to
"The Ten;" but as the court no longer sate,
And no permission had been given in writing,
I was thrust back, with the assurance that
Until that high tribunal re-assembled
The dungeon walls must still divide us.

DOGE.

True,
The form has been omitted in the haste
With which the court adjourn'd, and till it meets
'Tis dubious.

MARINA.

Till it meets! and when it meets,
They'll torture him again; and he and I
Must purchase by renewal of the rack
The interview of husband and of wife,
The holiest tie beneath the heavens?—Oh God!
Dost thou see this?

DOGE.

Child—child——

MARINA (*abruptly*).

Call *me* not "child!"

You soon will have no children—you deserve
none—
You, who can talk thus calmly of a son
In circumstances which would call forth tears
Of blood from Spartans! Though these did not
weep
Their boys who died in battle, is it written
That they beheld them perish piecemeal, nor
Stretch'd forth a hand to save them?

DOGE.

You behold me:
I cannot weep—I would I could; but if
Each white hair on this head were a young life,
This ducal cap the diadem of earth,
This ducal ring with which I wed the waves
A talisman to still them—I'd give all
For him.

MARINA.

With less he surely might be saved.

DOGE.

That answer only shows you know not Venice.
Alas! how should you? she knows not herself,
In all her mystery. Hear me—they who aim
At Foscari, aim no less at his father;

The sire's destruction would not save the son;
They work by different means to the same end,
And that is——but they have not conquer'd yet.

MARINA.

But they have crush'd.

DOGE.

Nor crush'd as yet—I live.

MARINA.

And your son,—how long will he live?

DOGE.

I trust,
For all that yet is past, as many years
And happier than his father. The rash boy,
With womanish impatience to return,
Hath ruin'd all by that detected letter;
A high crime, which I neither can deny
Nor palliate, as parent or as Duke:
Had he but borne a little, little longer
His Candiote exile, I had hopes——he has quench'd
them—
He must return.

MARINA.

To exile?

DOGE.

I have said it.

MARINA.

And can I not go with him?

DOGE.

You well know
This prayer of yours was twice denied before
By the assembled "Ten," and hardly now
Will be accorded to a third request,
Since aggravated errors on the part
Of your lord renders them still more austere.

MARINA.

Austere? Atrocious! The old human fiends,
With one foot in the grave, with dim eyes, strange
To tears save drops of dotage, with long white
And scanty hairs, and shaking hands, and heads
As palsied as their hearts are hard, they council,
Cabal, and put men's lives out, as if life
Were no more than the feelings long extinguish'd
In their accursed bosoms.

DOGE.

You know not——

MARINA.

I do—I do—and so should you, methinks—

That these are demons: could it be else that
Men, who have been of women born and suckled—
Who have loved, or talk'd at least of love—have given
Their hands in sacred vows—have danced their babes
Upon their knees, perhaps have mourn'd above them
In pain, in peril, or in death—who are,
Or were at least in seeming human, could
Do as they have done by yours, and you yourself,
You, who abet them?

DOGE.

I forgive this, for
You know not what you say.

MARINA.

You know it well,
And feel it nothing.

DOGE.

I have borne so much,
That words have ceased to shake me.

MARINA.

Oh, no doubt!

You have seen your son's blood flow, and your
flesh shook not;
And, after that, what are a woman's words?
No more than woman's tears, that they should
shake you.

DOGE.

Woman, this clamorous grief of thine, I tell thee,
Is no more in the balance weigh'd with that
Which——but I pity thee, my poor Marina!

MARINA.

Pity my husband, or I cast it from me;
Pity thy son! *Thou* pity!—'tis a word
Strange to thy heart—how came it on thy lips?

DOGE.

I must bear these reproaches, though they wrong
me.
Couldst thou but read——

MARINA.

'Tis not upon thy brow,
Nor in thine eyes, nor in thine acts,—where then
Should I behold this sympathy? or shall?

DOGE (*pointing downwards*).

There!

MARINA.

In the earth?

DOGE.

To which I am tending: when
It lies upon this heart, far lightlier, though
Loaded with marble, than the thoughts which press it
Now, you will know me better.

MARINA.

Are you, then,
Indeed, thus to be pitied?

DOGE.

Pitied! None
Shall ever use that base word, with which men
Cloke their soul's hoarded triumph, as a fit one
To mingle with my name; that name shall be,
As far as *I* have borne it, what it was
When I received it.

MARINA.

But for the poor children
Of him thou canst not, or thou wilt not save:
You were the last to bear it.

DOGE.

Would it were so!

Better for him he never had been born,
Better for me.—I have seen our house dishonour'd.

MARINA.

That's false! A truer, nobler, trustier heart,
More loving, or more loyal, never beat
Within a human breast. I would not change
My exiled, persecuted, mangled husband,
Oppress'd but not disgraced, crush'd, overwhelm'd,
Alive, or dead, for prince or paladin
In story or in fable, with a world
To back his suit. Dishonour'd!—*he* dishonour'd!
I tell thee, Doge, 'tis Venice is dishonour'd;
His name shall be her foulest, worst reproach,
For what he suffers, not for what he did.
'Tis ye who are all traitors, tyrant!—ye!
Did you but love your country like this victim,
Who totters back in chains to tortures, and
Submits to all things rather than to exile,
You'd fling yourselves before him, and implore
His grace for your enormous guilt.

DOGE.

He was
Indeed all you have said. I better bore

The deaths of the two sons Heaven took from me
Than Jacopo's disgrace.

MARINA.

That word again?

DOGE.

Has he not been condemn'd?

MARINA.

Is none but guilt so?

DOGE.

Time may restore his memory—I would hope so.
He was my pride, my——but 'tis useless now—
I am not given to tears, but wept for joy
When he was born: those drops were ominous.

MARINA.

I say he's innocent: and were he not so,
Is our own blood and kin to shrink from us
In fatal moments?

DOGE.

I shrank not from him:
But I have other duties than a father's;
The state would not dispense me from those duties;
Twice I demanded it, but was refused;
They must then be fulfill'd.

Enter an Attendant.

ATTENDANT.

A message from
"The Ten."

DOGE.

Who bears it?

ATTENDANT.

Noble Loredano.

DOGE.

He!—but admit him. [*Exit Attendant.*

MARINA.

Must I then retire?

DOGE.

Perhaps it is not requisite, if this
Concerns your husband, and if not——Well, signor,
Your pleasure! [*To* LOREDANO *entering.*

LOREDANO.

I bear that of "the Ten."

DOGE.

They
Have chosen well their envoy.

LOREDANO.

'Tis *their* choice
Which leads me here.

DOGE.

It does their wisdom honour,
And no less to their courtesy.—Proceed.

LOREDANO.

We have decided.

DOGE.

We?

LOREDANO.

"The Ten" in council

DOGE.

What! have they met again, and met without
Apprizing me?

LOREDANO.

They wish'd to spare your feelings
No less than age.

DOGE.

That's new—when spared they either?
I thank them, notwithstanding.

LOREDANO.

You know well

That they have power to act at their discretion,
With or without the presence of the Doge.

DOGE.

'Tis some years since I learn'd this, long before
I became Doge, or dream'd of such advancement.
You need not school me, signor: I sate in
That council when you were a young patrician.

LOREDANO.

True, in my father's time; I have heard him and
The admiral, his brother, say as much.
Your highness may remember them: they both
Died suddenly.

DOGE.

And if they did so, better
So die than live on lingeringly in pain.

LOREDANO.

No doubt! yet most men like to live their days
out.

DOGE.

And did not they?

LOREDANO.

The grave knows best: they died,
As I said, suddenly.

DOGE.

Is that so strange
That you repeat the word emphatically?

LOREDANO.

So far from strange, that never was there death
In my mind half so natural as theirs.
Think *you* not so?

DOGE.

What should I think of mortals?

LOREDANO.

That they have mortal foes.

DOGE.

I understand you;
Your sires were mine, and you are heir in all things.

LOREDANO.

You best know if I should be so.

DOGE.

I do.
Your fathers were my foes, and I have heard
Foul rumours were abroad; I have also read
Their epitaph, attributing their deaths
To poison. 'Tis perhaps as true as most

Inscriptions upon tombs, and yet no less
A fable.

LOREDANO.

Who dares say so?

DOGE.

I!—'Tis true
Your fathers were mine enemies, as bitter
As their son e'er can be, and I no less
Was theirs; but I was *openly* their foe:
I never work'd by plot in council, nor
Cabal in commonwealth, nor secret means
Of practice against life by steel or drug.
The proof is, your existence.

LOREDANO.

I fear not.

DOGE.

You have no cause, being what I am; but were I
That you would have me thought, you long ere now
Were past the sense of fear. Hate on; I care not.

LOREDANO.

I never yet knew that a noble's life
In Venice had to dread a Doge's frown,
That is, by open means.

DOGE.

But I, good signor,
Am, or at least *was*, more than a mere duke,
In blood, in mind, in means; and that they know
Who dreaded to elect me, and have since
Striven all they dare to weigh me down: be sure,
Before or since that period, had I held you
At so much price as to require your absence,
A word of mine had set such spirits to work
As would have made you nothing. But in all things
I have observed the strictest reverence,
Not for the laws alone, for those *you* have strain'd
(I do not speak of *you* but as a single
Voice of the many) somewhat beyond what
I could enforce for my authority
Were I disposed to brawl; but, as I said,
I have observed with veneration, like
A priest's for the high altar, even unto
The sacrifice of my own blood and quiet,
Safety, and all save honour, the decrees,
The health, the pride, and welfare of the state.
And now, sir, to your business.

LOREDANO.

'Tis decreed,
That, without farther repetition of
The Question, or continuance of the trial,
Which only tends to show how stubborn guilt is
("The Ten," dispensing with the stricter law
Which still prescribes the Question till a full
Confession, and the prisoner partly having
Avow'd his crime in not denying that
The letter to the Duke of Milan's his),
James Foscari return to banishment,
And sail in the same galley which convey'd him.

MARINA.

Thank God! At least they will not drag him more
Before that horrible tribunal. Would he
But think so, to my mind the happiest doom,
Not he alone, but all who dwell here, could
Desire, were to escape from such a land.

DOGE.

That is not a Venetian thought, my daughter.

MARINA.

No, 'twas too human. May I share his exile?

LOREDANO.

Of this "the Ten" said nothing.

MARINA.

So I thought:
That were too human, also. But it was not
Inhibited?

LOREDANO.

It was not named.

MARINA (*to the* DOGE).

Then, father,
Surely you can obtain or grant me thus much:

[*To* LOREDANO.

And you, sir, not oppose my prayer to be
Permitted to accompany my husband.

DOGE.

I will endeavour.

MARINA.

And you, signor?

LOREDANO.

Lady!
'Tis not for me to anticipate the pleasure
Of the tribunal.

MARINA.

Pleasure! what a word
To use for the decrees of——

DOGE.

Daughter, know you
In what a presence you pronounce these things?

MARINA.

A prince's and his subject's.

LOREDANO.

Subject!

MARINA.

Oh!
It galls you:—well, you are his equal, as
You think; but that you are not, nor would be,
Were he a peasant:—well, then, you're a prince,
A princely noble; and what then am I?

LOREDANO.

The offspring of a noble house.

MARINA.

And wedded
To one as noble. What or whose, then, is
The presence that should silence my free thoughts?

LOREDANO.

The presence of your husband's judges.

DOGE.

And

The deference due even to the lightest word
That falls from those who rule in Venice.

MARINA.

Keep
Those maxims for your mass of scared mechanics,
Your merchants, your Dalmatian and Greek slaves,
Your tributaries, your dumb citizens,
And mask'd nobility, your sbirri, and
Your spies, your galley and your other slaves,
To whom your midnight carryings off and drownings,
Your dungeons next the palace roofs, or under
The water's level; your mysterious meetings,
And unknown dooms, and sudden executions,
Your "Bridge of Sighs," your strangling chamber, and
Your torturing instruments, have made ye seem
The beings of another and worse world!
Keep such for them: I fear ye not. I know ye;
Have known and proved your worst, in the infernal
Process of my poor husband! Treat me as
Ye treated him:—you did so, in so dealing
With him. Then what have I to fear *from* you,

Even if I were of fearful nature, which
I trust I am not?

DOGE.

You hear, she speaks wildly.

MARINA.

Not wisely, yet not wildly.

LOREDANO.

Lady! words
Utter'd within these walls, I bear no further
Than to the threshold, saving such as pass
Between the Duke and me on the state's service.
Doge! have you aught in answer?

DOGE.

Something from
The Doge, it may be also from a parent.

LOREDANO.

My mission *here* is to the *Doge*.

DOGE.

Then say
The Doge will choose his own embassador,
Or state in person what is meet; and for
The father——

LOREDANO.

I remember *mine*.—Farewell!

I kiss the hands of the illustrious lady,
And bow me to the Duke.

[*Exit* LOREDANO.

MARINA.

Are you content?

DOGE.

I am what you behold.

MARINA

And that's a mystery.

DOGE.

All things are so to mortals; who can read them
Save he who made? or, if they can, the few
And gifted spirits, who have studied long
That loathsome volume—man, and pored upon
Those black and bloody leaves his heart and brain,
But learn a magic which recoils upon
The adept who pursues it: all the sins
We find in others, nature made our own;
All our advantages are those of fortune;
Birth, wealth, health, beauty, are her accidents,
And when we cry out against Fate, 'twere well
We should remember Fortune can take nought
Save what she *gave*—the rest was nakedness,

And lusts, and appetites, and vanities,
The universal heritage, to battle
With as we may, and least in humblest stations,
Where hunger swallows all in one low want,
And the original ordinance, that man
Must sweat for his poor pittance, keeps all passions
Aloof, save fear of famine! All is low,
And false, and hollow—clay from first to last,
The prince's urn no less than potter's vessel.
Our fame is in men's breath, our lives upon
Less than their breath; our durance upon days,
Our days on seasons; our whole being on
Something which is not *us*!—So, we are slaves,
The greatest as the meanest—nothing rests
Upon our will; the will itself no less
Depends upon a straw than on a storm;
And when we think we lead, we are most led,
And still towards death, a thing which comes as much
Without our act or choice, as birth; so that
Methinks we must have sinn'd in some old world,
And *this* is hell: the best is, that it is not
Eternal.

MARINA.

These are things we cannot judge
On earth.

DOGE.

And how then shall we judge each other,
Who are all earth, and I, who am call'd upon
To judge my son? I have administer'd
My country faithfully—victoriously—
I dare them to the proof, the *chart* of what
She was and is: my reign has doubled realms;
And, in reward, the gratitude of Venice
Has left, or is about to leave, *me* single.

MARINA.

And Foscari? I do not think of such things,
So I be left with him.

DOGE.

You shall be so;
Thus much they cannot well deny.

MARINA.

And if
They should, I will fly with him.

DOGE.

That can ne'er be.
And whither would you fly?

MARINA.

I know not, reck not—
To Syria, Egypt, to the Ottoman—
Any where, where we might respire unfetter'd,
And live nor girt by spies, nor liable
To edicts of inquisitors of state.

DOGE.

What, wouldst thou have a renegade for husband,
And turn him into traitor?

MARINA.

He is none!
The country is the traitress, which thrusts forth
Her best and bravest from her. Tyranny
Is far the worst of treasons. Dost thou deem
None rebels except subjects? The prince who
Neglects or violates his trust is more
A brigand than the robber-chief.

DOGE.

I cannot
Charge me with such a breach of faith.

MARINA.

No; thou
Observ'st, obey'st, such laws as make old Draco's
A code of mercy by comparison.

DOGE.

I found the law; I did not make it. Were I
A subject, still I might find parts and portions
Fit for amendment; but as prince, I never
Would change, for the sake of my house, the charter
Left by our fathers.

MARINA.

Did they make it for
The ruin of their children?

DOGE.

Under such laws, Venice
Has risen to what she is—a state to rival
In deeds, and days, and sway, and, let me add,
In glory (for we have had Roman spirits
Amongst us), all that history has bequeath'd
Of Rome and Carthage in their best times, when
The people sway'd by senates.

MARINA.

Rather say,
Groan'd under the stern oligarchs.

DOGE.

Perhaps so;
But yet subdued the world: in such a state
An individual, be he richest of

Such rank as is permitted, or the meanest,
Without a name, is alike nothing, when
The policy, irrevocably tending
To one great end, must be maintain'd in vigour.

MARINA.

This means that you are more a Doge than father.

DOGE.

It means, I am more citizen than either.
If we had not for many centuries
Had thousands of such citizens, and shall,
I trust, have still such, Venice were no city.

MARINA.

Accursed be the city where the laws
Would stifle nature's!

DOGE.

Had I as many sons
As I have years, I would have given them all,
Not without feeling, but I would have given them
To the state's service, to fulfil her wishes
On the flood, in the field, or, if it must be,
As it, alas! has been, to ostracism,
Exile, or chains, or whatsoever worse
She might decree.

MARINA.

And this is patriotism?
To me it seems the worst barbarity.
Let me seek out my husband: the sage "Ten,"
With all its jealousy, will hardly war
So far with a weak woman as deny me
A moment's access to his dungeon.

DOGE.

I'll
So far take on myself, as order that
You may be admitted.

MARINA.

And what shall I say
To Foscari from his father?

DOGE.

That he obey
The laws.

MARINA.

And nothing more? Will you not see him
Ere he depart? It may be the last time.

DOGE.

The last!—my boy!—the last time I shall see
My last of children! Tell him I will come.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.

The Prison of JACOPO FOSCARI.

JACOPO FOSCARI (*solus*).

No light, save yon faint gleam, which shows me
walls
Which never echo'd but to sorrow's sounds,
The sigh of long imprisonment, the step
Of feet on which the iron clank'd, the groan
Of death, the imprecation of despair!
And yet for this I have return'd to Venice,
With some faint hope, 'tis true, that time, which
wears
The marble down, had worn away the hate
Of men's hearts: but I knew them not, and here
Must I consume my own, which never beat
For Venice but with such a yearning as
The dove has for her distant nest, when wheeling
High in the air on her return to greet

Her callow brood. What letters are these which
[*Approaching the wall.*
Are scrawl'd along the inexorable wall?
Will the gleam let me trace them? Ah! the names
Of my sad predecessors in this place,
The dates of their despair, the brief words of
A grief too great for many. This stone page
Holds like an epitaph their history,
And the poor captive's tale is graven on
His dungeon barrier, like the lover's record
Upon the bark of some tall tree, which bears
His own and his beloved's name. Alas!
I recognize some names familiar to me,
And blighted like to mine, which I will add,
Fittest for such a chronicle as this,
Which only can be read, as writ, by wretches.
[*He engraves his name.*

Enter a Familiar of "the Ten."

FAMILIAR.

I bring you food.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

I pray you set it down;

I am past hunger; but my lips are parch'd—
The water!

FAMILIAR.

There.

JACOPO FOSCARI (*after drinking*).

I thank you: I am better.

FAMILIAR.

I am commanded to inform you that
Your further trial is postponed.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Till when?

FAMILIAR.

I know not.—It is also in my orders
That your illustrious lady be admitted

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Ah! they relent then—I had ceased to hope it:
'Twas time.

Enter MARINA.

MARINA.

My best beloved!

JACOPO FOSCARI (*embracing her*).

My true wife,
And only friend! What happiness!

MARINA.

We'll part
No more.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

How! wouldst thou share a dungeon?

MARINA.

Ay,
The rack, the grave, all—any thing with thee,
But the tomb last of all, for there we shall
Be ignorant of each other: yet I will
Share that—all things except new separation;
It is too much to have survived the first
How dost thou? How are those worn limbs? Alas!
Why do I ask? Thy paleness——

JACOPO FOSCARI.

'Tis the joy
Of seeing thee again so soon, and so
Without expectancy, has sent the blood
Back to my heart, and left my cheeks like thine,
For thou art pale too, my Marina!

MARINA.

'Tis
The gloom of this eternal cell, which never
Knew sunbeam, and the sallow sullen glare

Of the familiar's torch, which seems akin
To darkness more than light, by lending to
The dungeon vapours its bituminous smoke,
Which cloud whate'er we gaze on, even thine eyes—
No, not thine eyes—they sparkle—how they sparkle!

JACOPO FOSCARI.

And thine!—but I am blinded by the torch.

MARINA.

As I had been without it. Couldst thou see here?

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Nothing at first; but use and time had taught me
Familiarity with what was darkness;
And the gray twilight of such glimmerings as
Glide through the crevices made by the winds
Was kinder to mine eyes than the full sun,
When gorgeously o'ergilding any towers
Save those of Venice: but a moment ere
Thou camest hither I was busy writing.

MARINA.

What?

JACOPO FOSCARI.

My name: look, 'tis there—recorded next

The name of him who here preceded me,
If dungeon dates say true.

MARINA.

And what of him?

JACOPO FOSCARI.

These walls are silent of men's ends; they only
Seem to hint shrewdly of them. Such stern walls
Were never piled on high save o'er the dead,
Or those who soon must be so.—*What of him?*
Thou askest.—What of me? may soon be ask'd,
With the like answer—doubt and dreadful surmise—
Unless thou tell'st my tale.

MARINA.

I speak of thee!

JACOPO FOSCARI.

And wherefore not? All then shall speak of me:
The tyranny of silence is not lasting,
And, though events be hidden, just men's groans
Will burst all cerement, even a living grave's!
I do not *doubt* my memory, but my life;
And neither do I fear.

MARINA.

Thy life is safe.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

And liberty?

MARINA.

The mind should make its own.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

That has a noble sound; but 'tis a sound,
A music most impressive, but too transient:
The mind is much, but is not all. The mind
Hath nerved me to endure the risk of death,
And torture positive, far worse than death
(If death be a deep sleep), without a groan,
Or with a cry which rather shamed my judges
Than me; but 'tis not all, for there are things
More woful—such as this small dungeon, where
I may breathe many years.

MARINA.

Alas! and this
Small dungeon is all that belongs to thee
Of this wide realm, of which thy sire is prince.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

That thought would scarcely aid me to endure it.
My doom is common, many are in dungeons,
But none like mine, so near their father's palace;
But then my heart is sometimes high, and hope

Will stream along those moted rays of light
Peopled with dusty atoms, which afford
Our only day; for, save the jailor's torch,
And a strange firefly, which was quickly caught
Last night in yon enormous spider's net,
I ne'er saw aught here like a ray. Alas!
I know if mind may bear us up, or no,
For I have such, and shown it before men;
It sinks in solitude: my soul is social.

MARINA.

I will be with thee.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Ah! if it were so!
But *that* they never granted—nor will grant,
And I shall be alone: no men—no books—
Those lying likenesses of lying men.
I ask'd for even those outlines of their kind,
Which they term annals, history, what you will,
Which men bequeath as portraits, and they were
Refused me; so these walls have been my study,
More faithful pictures of Venetian story,
With all their blank, or dismal stains, than is
The hall not far from hence, which bears on high
Hundreds of doges, and their deeds and dates.

MARINA.

I come to tell thee the result of their
Last council on thy doom.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

I know it—look!

[*He points to his limbs, as referring to the tortures which he had undergone.*

MARINA.

No—no—no more of that: even they relent
From that atrocity.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

What then?

MARINA.

That you
turn to Candia.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Then my last hope's gone.
I could endure my dungeon, for 'twas Venice;
I could support the torture, there was something
In my native air that buoy'd my spirits up
Like a ship on the ocean toss'd by storms,
But proudly still bestriding the high waves,
And holding on its course; but *there*, afar,
In that accursed isle of slaves, and captives,

And unbelievers, like a stranded wreck,
My very soul seem'd mouldering in my bosom,
And piecemeal I shall perish, if remanded.

MARINA.

And *here*?

JACOPO FOSCARI.

At once—by better means, as briefer.
What! would they even deny me my sires' sepulchre,
As well as home and heritage?

MARINA.

My husband!
I have sued to accompany thee hence,
And not so hopelessly. This love of thine
For an ungrateful and tyrannic soil
Is passion, and not patriotism: for me,
So I could see thee with a quiet aspect,
And the sweet freedom of the earth and air,
I would not cavil about climes or regions.
This crowd of palaces and prisons is not
A paradise; its first inhabitants
Were wretched exiles.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Well I know *how* wretched!

MARINA.

And yet you see how from their banishment
Before the Tartar into these salt isles,
Their antique energy of mind, all that
Remain'd of Rome for their inheritance,
Created by degrees an ocean-Rome;
And shall an evil, which so often leads
To good, depress thee thus?

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Had I gone forth
From my own land, like the old patriarchs, seeking
Another region, with their flocks and herds;
Had I been cast out like the Jews from Zion,
Or like our fathers, driven by Attila
From fertile Italy to barren islets,
I would have given some tears to my late country,
And many thoughts; but afterwards address'd
Myself, with those about me, to create
A new home and fresh state: perhaps I could
Have borne this—though I know not.

MARINA.

Wherefore not?
It was the lot of millions, and must be
The fate of myriads more.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Ay—we but hear
Of the survivors' toil in their new lands,
Their numbers and success; but who can number
The hearts which broke in silence of that parting,
Or after their departure; of that malady*
Which calls up green and native fields to view
From the rough deep, with such identity
To the poor exile's fever'd eye, that he
Can scarcely be restrain'd from treading them?
That melody,† which out of tones and tunes
Collects such pasture for the longing sorrow
Of the sad mountaineer, when far away
From his snow canopy of cliffs and clouds,
That he feeds on the sweet, but poisonous thought,
And dies. You call this *weakness!* It is strength,
I say,—the parent of all honest feeling.
He who loves not his country, can love nothing.

MARINA.

Obey her, then; 'tis she that puts thee forth.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Ay, there it is: 'tis like a mother's curse

* The calenture.

† Alluding to the Swiss air and its effects.

Upon my soul—the mark is set upon me.
The exiles you speak of went forth by nations,
Their hands upheld each other by the way,
Their tents were pitched together—I'm alone.

MARINA.

You shall be so no more—I will go with thee.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

My best Marina!—and our children?

MARINA.

They,
I fear, by the prevention of the state's
Abhorrent policy (which holds all ties
As threads, which may be broken at her pleasure),
Will not be suffer'd to proceed with us.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

And canst thou leave them?

MARINA.

Yes. With many a pang.
But—I *can* leave them, children as they are,
To teach you to be less a child. From this
Learn you to sway your feelings, when exacted
By duties paramount; and 'tis our first
On earth to bear.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Have I not borne?

MARINA.

Too much
From tyrannous injustice, and enough
To teach you not to shrink now from a lot
Which, as compared with what you have undergone
Of late, is mercy.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Ah! you never yet
Were far away from Venice, never saw
Her beautiful towers in the receding distance,
While every furrow of the vessel's track
Seem'd ploughing deep into your heart; you never
Saw day go down upon your native spires
So calmly with its gold and crimson glory,
And after dreaming a disturbed vision
Of them and theirs, awoke and found them not.

MARINA.

I will divide this with you. Let us think
Of our departure from this much-loved city
(Since you must *love* it, as it seems), and this
Chamber of state, her gratitude allots you.

Our children will be cared for by the Doge,
And by my uncles: we must sail ere night.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

That's sudden. Shall I not behold my father?

MARINA.

You will.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Where?

MARINA.

Here or in the ducal chamber—
He said not which. I would that you could bear
Your exile as he bears it.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Blame him not.
I sometimes murmur for a moment; but
He could not now act otherwise. A show
Of feeling or compassion on his part
Would have but drawn upon his aged head
Suspicion from "the Ten," and upon mine
Accumulated ills.

MARINA.

Accumulated!
What pangs are those they have spared you?

JACOPO FOSCARI.

That of leaving
Venice without beholding him or you,
Which might have been forbidden now, as 'twas
Upon my former exile.

MARINA.

That is true,
And thus far I am also the state's debtor,
And shall be more so when I see us both
Floating on the free waves—away—away—
Be it to the earth's end, from this abhorr'd,
Unjust, and——

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Curse it not. If I am silent,
Who dares accuse my country?

MARINA.

Men and angels!
The blood of myriads reeking up to heaven,
The groans of slaves in chains, and men in dungeons,
Mothers, and wives, and sons, and sires, and subjects,
Held in the bondage of ten bald-heads; and

Though last, not least, *thy silence. Couldst thou*
say
Aught in its favour, who would praise like *thee?*

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Let us address us then, since so it must be,
To our departure. Who comes here?

Enter LOREDANO, *attended by Familiars.*

LOREDANO (*to the Familiars*).

Retire,
But leave the torch. [*Exeunt the two Familiars.*

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Most welcome, noble signor.
I did not deem this poor place could have drawn
Such presence hither.

LOREDANO.

'Tis not the first time
I have visited these places.

MARINA.

Nor would be
The last, were all men's merits well rewarded.
Came you here to insult us, or remain
As spy upon us, or as hostage for us?

LOREDANO.

Neither are of my office, noble lady!
I am sent hither to your husband, to
Announce "the Ten's" decree.

MARINA.

That tenderness
Has been anticipated: it is known.

LOREDANO.

As how?

MARINA.

I have inform'd him, not so gently,
Doubtless, as your nice feelings would prescribe,
The indulgence of your colleagues; but he knew it.
If you come for our thanks, take them, and hence!
The dungeon gloom is deep enough without you,
And full of reptiles, not less loathsome, though
Their sting is honester.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

I pray you, calm you:
What can avail such words?

MARINA.

To let him know
That he is known.

LOREDANO.

Let the fair dame preserve
Her sex's privilege.

MARINA.

I have some sons, sir,
Will one day thank you better.

LOREDANO.

You do well
To nurse them wisely. Foscari—you know
Your sentence, then?

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Return to Candia?

LOREDANO.

True—
For life.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Not long.

LOREDANO.

I said—for *life*.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

And I
Repeat—not long.

LOREDANO.

A year's imprisonment

In Canea—afterwards the freedom of
The whole isle.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Both the same to me: the after
Freedom as is the first imprisonment.
Is't true my wife accompanies me?

LOREDANO.

Yes,
If she so wills it.

MARINA.

Who obtain'd that justice?

LOREDANO.

One who wars not with women.

MARINA.

But oppresses
Men: howsoever, let him have *my* thanks
For the only boon I would have ask'd or taken
From him or such as he is.

LOREDANO.

He receives them
As they are offer'd.

MARINA.

May they thrive with him
So much!—no more.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Is this, sir, your whole mission?
Because we have brief time for preparation,
And you perceive your presence doth disquiet
This lady, of a house noble as yours.

MARINA.

Nobler!

LOREDANO.

How nobler?

MARINA.

As more generous!
We say the "generous steed" to express the purity
Of his high blood. Thus much I've learnt, although
Venetian (who see few steeds save of bronze),
From those Venetians who have skimm'd the coasts
Of Egypt, and her neighbour Araby:
And why not say as soon "the *generous man?*"
If race be aught, it is in qualities
More than in years; and mine, which is as old
As yours, is better in its product, nay—
Look not so stern—but get you back, and pore

Upon your genealogic tree's most green
Of leaves and most mature of fruits, and there
Blush to find ancestors, who would have blush'd
For such a son—thou cold inveterate hater!

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Again, Marina!

MARINA.

Again! *still*, Marina.
See you not, he comes here to glut his hate
With a last look upon our misery?
Let him partake it!

JACOPO FOSCARI.

That were difficult

MARINA.

Nothing more easy. He partakes it now—
Ay, he may veil beneath a marble brow
And sneering lip the pang, but he partakes it.
A few brief words of truth shame the devil's servants
No less than master; I have probed his soul
A moment, as the eternal fire, ere long,
Will reach it always. See how he shrinks from me!
With death, and chains, and exile in his hand

To scatter o'er his kind as he thinks fit:
They are his weapons, not his armour, for
I have pierced him to the core of his cold heart.
I care not for his frowns! We can but die,
And he but live, for him the very worst
Of destinies: each day secures him more
His tempter's.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

This is mere insanity.

MARINA.

It may be so; and *who* hath made us *mad?*

LOREDANO.

Let her go on, it irks not me.

MARINA.

That's false!
You came here to enjoy a heartless triumph
Of cold looks upon manifold griefs! You came
To be sued to in vain—to mark our tears,
And hoard our groans—to gaze upon the wreck
Which you have made a prince's son—my husband;
In short, to trample on the fallen—an office
The hangman shrinks from, as all men from him!
How have you sped? We are wretched, signor, as

Your plots could make, and vengeance could desire us,
And how *feel you?*

LOREDANO.

As rocks.

MARINA.

By thunder blasted:
They feel not, but no less are shiver'd. Come,
Foscari, now let us go, and leave this felon,
The sole fit habitant of such a cell,
Which he has peopled often, but ne'er fitly
Till he himself shall brood in it alone.

Enter the DOGE.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

My father!

DOGE (*embracing him*).

Jacopo! my son—my son!

JACOPO FOSCARI.

My father still! How long it is since I
Have heard thee name my name—*our* name!

DOGE.

My boy!
Couldst thou but know——

JACOPO FOSCARI.

I rarely, sir, have murmur'd

DOGE.

I feel too much thou hast not.

MARINA.

Doge, look there!

[*She points to* LOREDANO.

DOGE.

I see the man—what mean'st thou?

MARINA.

Caution!

LOREDANO.

Being
The virtue which this noble lady most
May practise, she doth well to recommend it.

MARINA.

Wretch! 'tis no virtue, but the policy
Of those who fain must deal perforce with vice:
As such I recommend it, as I would
To one whose foot was on an adder's path.

DOGE.

Daughter, it is superfluous; I have long
Known Loredano.

LOREDANO.

You may know him better

MARINA.

Yes; *worse* he could not.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Father, let not these
Our parting hours be lost in listening to
Reproaches, which boot nothing. Is it—is it,
Indeed, our last of meetings?

DOGE.

You behold
These white hairs!

JACOPO FOSCARI.

And I feel, besides, that mine
Will never be so white. Embrace me, father!
I loved you ever—never more than now.
Look to my children—to your last child's children:
Let them be all to you which he was once,
And never be to you what I am now.
May I not see *them* also?

MARINA.

No—not *here*.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

They might behold their parent any where.

MARINA.

I would that they beheld their father in
A place which would not mingle fear with love,
To freeze their young blood in its natural current.
They have fed well, slept soft, and knew not that
Their sire was a mere hunted outlaw. Well
I know his fate may one day be their heritage,
But let it only be their *heritage*,
And not their present fee. Their senses, though
Alive to love, are yet awake to terror ,
And these vile damps, too, and yon *thick green* wave
Which floats above the place where we now stand—
A cell so far below the water's level,
Sending its pestilence through every crevice,
Might strike them : *this is not their* atmosphere,
However you—and you—and, most of all,
As worthiest—*you*, sir, noble Loredano !
May breathe it without prejudice.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

I had not
Reflected upon this, but acquiesce.
I shall depart, then, without meeting them ?

DOGE.

Not so: they shall await you in my chamber.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

And must I leave them *all?*

LOREDANO.

You must.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Not one?

LOREDANO.

They are the state's.

MARINA.

I thought they had been mine.

LOREDANO.

They are, in all maternal things.

MARINA.

That is,
In all things painful. If they're sick, they will
Be left to me to tend them; should they die,
To me to bury and to mourn: but if
They live, they'll make you soldiers, senators,
Slaves, exiles—what *you* will; or if they are
Females with portions, brides and *bribes* for nobles!
Behold the state's care for its sons and mothers!

LOREDANO.

The hour approaches, and the wind is fair

JACOPO FOSCARI.

How know you that here, where the genial wind
Ne'er blows in all its blustering freedom?

LOREDANO.

'Twas so
When I came here. The galley floats within
A bow-shot of the "Riva di Schiavoni."

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Father! I pray you to precede me, and
Prepare my children to behold their father.

DOGE.

Be firm, my son!

JACOPO FOSCARI.

I will do my endeavour.

MARINA.

Farewell! at least to this detested dungeon,
And him to whose good offices you owe
In part your past imprisonment.

LOREDANO.

And present
Liberation.

DOGE.

He speaks truth.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

No doubt : but 'tis
Exchange of chains for heavier chains I owe him.
He knows this, or he had not sought to change them.
But I reproach not.

LOREDANO.

The time narrows, signor.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Alas! I little thought so lingeringly
To leave abodes like this : but when I feel
That every step I take, even from this cell,
Is one away from Venice, I look back
Even on these dull damp walls, and——

DOGE.

Boy! no tears.

MARINA.

Let them flow on : he wept not on the rack
To shame him, and they cannot shame him now.
They will relieve his heart—that too kind heart—
And I will find an hour to wipe away
Those tears, or add my own. I could weep now,

But would not gratify yon wretch so far.
Let us proceed. Doge, lead the way.

LOREDANO (*to the Familiar*).

The torch, there!

MARINA.

Yes, light us on, as to a funeral pyre,
With Loredano mourning like an heir.

DOGE.

My son, you are feeble: take this hand.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Alas!
Must youth support itself on age, and I
Who ought to be the prop of yours?

LOREDANO.

Take mine.

MARINA.

Touch it not, Foscari; 'twill sting you. Signor,
Stand off! be sure, that if a grasp of yours
Would raise us from the gulf wherein we are plunged,
No hand of ours would stretch itself to meet it.
Come, Foscari, take the hand the altar gave you;
It could not save, but will support you ever.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

A Hall in the Ducal Palace.

Enter LOREDANO *and* BARBARIGO

BARBARIGO.

And have you confidence in such a project?

LOREDANO.

I have.

BARBARIGO.

'Tis hard upon his years.

LOREDANO.

Say rather
Kind to relieve him from the cares of state.

BARBARIGO.

'Twill break his heart.

LOREDANO.

Age has no heart to break.
He has seen his son's half broken, and, except
A start of feeling in his dungeon, never
Swerved.

BARBARIGO.

In his countenance, I grant you, never;
But I have seen him sometimes in a calm
So desolate, that the most clamorous grief
Had nought to envy him within. Where is he?

LOREDANO.

In his own portion of the palace, with
His son, and the whole race of Foscaris.

BARBARIGO.

Bidding farewell.

LOREDANO.

A last. As soon he shall
Bid to his dukedom.

BARBARIGO.

When embarks the son?

LOREDANO.

Forthwith—when this long leave is taken. 'Tis
Time to admonish them again.

BARBARIGO.

Forbear,
Retrench not from their moments.

LOREDANO.

Not I, now
We have higher business for our own. This day

Shall be the last of the old Doge's reign,
As the first of his son's last banishment,
And that is vengeance.

BARBARIGO.

In my mind, too deep.

LOREDANO.

'Tis moderate—not even life for life, the rule
Denounced of retribution from all time;
They owe me still my father's and my uncle's

BARBARIGO.

Did not the Doge deny this strongly?

LOREDANO.

Doubtless.

BARBARIGO.

And did not this shake your suspicion!

LOREDANO.

No.

BARBARIGO.

But if this deposition should take place
By our united influence in the council,
It must be done with all the deference
Due to his years, his station, and his deeds.

LOREDANO.

As much of ceremony as you will,

So that the thing be done. You may, for aught
I care, depute the Council on their knees,
(Like Barbarossa to the Pope), to beg him
To have the courtesy to abdicate.

BARBARIGO.

What, if he will not?

LOREDANO.

We'll elect another,
And make him null.

BARBARIGO.

But will the laws uphold us?

LOREDANO.

What laws?—"The Ten" are laws; and if they were not,
I will be legislator in this business.

BARBARIGO.

At your own peril?

LOREDANO.

There is none, I tell you,
Our powers are such.

BARBARIGO.

But he has twice already
Solicited permission to retire,
And twice it was refused.

LOREDANO.

The better reason
To grant it the third time.

BARBARIGO.

Unask'd?

LOREDANO.

It shows
The impression of his former instances:
If they were from his heart, he may be thankful;
If not, 'twill punish his hypocrisy.
Come, they are met by this time; let us join them,
And be *thou* fix'd in purpose for this once.
I have prepared such arguments as will not
Fail to move them, and to remove him: since
Their thoughts, their objects, have been sounded, do not
You, with your wonted scruples, teach us pause,
And all will prosper.

BARBARIGO.

Could I but be certain
This is no prelude to such persecution
Of the sire as has fallen upon the son,
I would support you.

LOREDANO.

He is safe, I tell you ;
His fourscore years and five may linger on
As long as he can drag them : 'tis his throne
Alone is aim'd at.

BARBARIGO.

But discarded princes
Are seldom long of life.

LOREDANO.

And men of eighty
More seldom still.

BARBARIGO.

And why not wait these few years?

LOREDANO.

Because we have waited long enough, and he
Lived longer than enough. Hence! In to council!
[*Exeunt* LOREDANO *and* BARBARIGO.

Enter MEMMO *and a Senator.*

SENATOR.

A summons to " the Ten!" Why so?

MEMMO.

" The Ten"
Alone can answer : they are rarely wont

To let their thoughts anticipate their purpose
By previous proclamation. We are summon'd—
That is enough

SENATOR.

For them, but not for us;
I would know why.

MEMMO.

You will know why anon,
If you obey, and, if not, you no less
Will know why you should have obey'd.

SENATOR.

I mean not
To oppose them, *but*——

MEMMO.

In Venice "*But*'s" a traitor
But me no "*buts*," unless you would pass o'er
The Bridge which few repass.

SENATOR.

I am silent.

MEMMO.

Why
Thus hesitate?—"The Ten" have call'd in aid
Of their deliberation five and twenty
Patricians of the senate—you are one,

And I another; and it seems to me
Both honour'd by the choice or chance which leads us
To mingle with a body so august.

SENATOR.

Most true. I say no more.

MEMMO.

As we hope, signor,
And all may honestly (that is, all those
Of noble blood may), one day hope to be
Decemvir, it is surely for the senate's
Chosen delegates a school of wisdom, to
Be thus admitted, though as novices,
To view the mysteries.

SENATOR.

Let us view them: they,
No doubt, are worth it.

MEMMO.

Being worth our lives
If we divulge them, doubtless they are worth
Something, at least to you or me.

SENATOR.

I sought not
A place within the sanctuary; but being

Chosen, however reluctantly so chosen,
I shall fulfil my office.

MEMMO.

Let us not
Be latest in obeying "the Ten's" summons.

SENATOR.

All are not met, but I am of your thought
So far—let's in.

MEMMO.

The earliest are most welcome
In earnest councils—we will not be least so.

[*Exeunt.*

Enter the DOGE, JACOPO FOSCARI, *and* MARINA.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Ah, father! though I must and will depart,
Yet—yet—I pray you to obtain for me
That I once more return unto my home,
Howe'er remote the period. Let there be
A point of time as beacon to my heart,
With any penalty annex'd they please,
But let me still return.

DOGE.

Son Jacopo,

Go and obey our country's will: 'tis not
For us to look beyond.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

But still I must
Look back. I pray you think of me.

DOGE.

Alas!
You ever were my dearest offspring, when
They were more numerous, nor can be less so
Now you are last; but did the state demand
The exile of the disinterred ashes
Of your three goodly brothers, now in earth,
And their desponding shades came flitting round
To impede the act, I must no less obey
A duty paramount to every duty.

MARINA.

My husband! let us on: this but prolongs
Our sorrow.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

But we are not summon'd yet;
The galley's sails are not unfurl'd:—who knows?
The wind may change.

MARINA.

And if it do, it will not

Change *their* hearts, or your lot: the galley's oars
Will quickly clear the harbour.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Oh, ye elements!
Where are your storms?

MARINA.

In human breasts. Alas!
Will nothing calm you?

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Never yet did mariner
Put up to patron saint such prayers for prosperous
And pleasant breezes, as I call upon you,
Ye tutelar saints of my own city! which
Ye love not with more holy love than I,
To lash up from the deep the Adrian waves,
And waken Auster, sovereign of the tempest!
Till the sea dash me back on my own shore
A broken corse upon the barren Lido,
Where I may mingle with the sands which skirt
The land I love, and never shall see more!

MARINA.

And wish you this with *me* beside you?

JACOPO FOSCARI.

No—

No—not for thee, too good, too kind! May'st
thou
Live long to be a mother to those children
Thy fond fidelity for a time deprives
Of such support! But for myself alone,
May all the winds of heaven howl down the Gulf,
And tear the vessel, till the mariners,
Appall'd, turn their despairing eyes on me,
As the Phenicians did on Jonah, then
Cast me out from amongst them, as an offering
To appease the waves. The billow which de-
stroys me
Will be more merciful than man, and bear me,
Dead, but *still bear* me to a native grave,
From fisher's hands upon the desolate strand,
Which, of its thousand wrecks, hath ne'er received
One lacerated like the heart which then
Will be——But wherefore breaks it not? why
live I?

MARINA.

To man thyself, I trust, with time, to master
Such useless passion. Until now thou wert
A sufferer, but not a loud one: why,

What is this to the things thou hast borne in si-
lence—
Imprisonment and actual torture?

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Double,
Triple, and tenfold torture! But you are right,
It must be borne. Father, your blessing.

DOGE.

Would
It could avail thee! but no less thou hast it.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Forgive——

DOGE.

What?

JACOPO FOSCARI.

My poor mother for my birth,
And me for having lived, and you yourself
(As I forgive you), for the gift of life,
Which you bestow'd upon me as my sire.

MARINA.

What hast thou done?

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Nothing. I cannot charge
My memory with much save sorrow: but

I have been so beyond the common lot
Chasten'd and visited, I needs must think
That I was wicked. If it be so, may
What I have undergone here keep me from
A like hereafter.

MARINA.

Fear not: *that's* reserved
For your oppressors.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Let me hope not.

MARINA.

Hope not?

JACOPO FOSCARI.

I cannot wish them *all* they have inflicted.

MARINA.

All! the consummate fiends! A thousand fold.
May the worm which ne'er dieth feed upon them!

JACOPO FOSCARI.

They may repent.

MARINA.

And if they do, Heaven will not
Accept the tardy penitence of demons.

Enter an Officer and Guards.

OFFICER.

Signor! the boat is at the shore—the wind
Is rising—we are ready to attend you.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

And I to be attended. Once more, father,
Your hand!

DOGE.

Take it. Alas! how thine own trembles!

JACOPO FOSCARI.

No—you mistake; 'tis yours that shakes, my father.
Farewell!

DOGE.

Farewell! Is there aught else?

JACOPO FOSCARI.

No—nothing:
[*To the Officer.*
Lend me your arm, good signor.

OFFICER.

You turn pale—
Let me support you—paler—ho! some aid there!
Some water!

MARINA.

Ah, he is dying!

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Now, I'm ready—
My eyes swim strangely—where's the door?

MARINA.

Away!
Let me support him—my best love! Oh, God!
How faintly beats this heart—this pulse!

JACOPO FOSCARI.

The light!
Is it the light?—I am faint.

[*Officer presents him with water.*

OFFICER.

He will be better,
Perhaps, in the air.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

I doubt not. Father—wife—
Your hands!

MARINA.

There's death in that damp clammy grasp.
Oh God!—My Foscari, how fare you?

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Well!

[*He dies.*

OFFICER.

He's gone.

DOGE.

He's free.

MARINA.

No—no, he is not dead;
There must be life yet in that heart—he could not
Thus leave me.

DOGE.

Daughter!

MARINA.

Hold thy peace, old man!
I am no daughter now—thou hast no son.
Oh, Foscari!

OFFICER.

We must remove the body.

MARINA.

Touch it not, dungeon miscreants! your base office
Ends with his life, and goes not beyond murder,
Even by your murderous laws. Leave his remains
To those who know to honour them.

OFFICER.

I must
Inform the signory, and learn their pleasure.

DOGE.

Inform the signory from *me*, the Doge,
They have no further power upon those ashes:
While he lived, he was theirs, as fits a subject—
Now he is *mine*—my broken-hearted boy!

[*Exit Officer.*

MARINA.

And I must live!

DOGE.

Your children live, Marina.

MARINA.

My children! true—they live, and I must live
To bring them up to serve the state, and die
As died their father. Oh! what best of blessings
Were barrenness in Venice! Would my mother
Had been so!

DOGE.

My unhappy children!

MARINA.

What!
You feel it then at last—*you!*—Where is now
The stoic of the state?

DOGE (*throwing himself down by the body*).

Here!

MARINA.

Ay, weep on!
I thought you had no tears—you hoarded them
Until they are useless; but weep on! he never
Shall weep more—never, never more.

Enter LOREDANO *and* BARBARIGO

LOREDANO.

What's here?

MARINA.

Ah! the devil come to insult the dead! Avaunt!
Incarnate Lucifer! 'tis holy ground.
A martyr's ashes now lie there, which make it
A shrine. Get thee back to thy place of torment!

BARBARIGO.

Lady, we knew not of this sad event,
But pass'd here merely on our path from council.

MARINA.

Pass on.

LOREDANO.

We sought the Doge.

MARINA (*pointing to the* DOGE, *who is still on the ground by his son's body*).

He's busy, look,

About the business *you* provided for him.
Are ye content?

BARBARIGO.

We will not interrupt
A parent's sorrows.

MARINA.

No, ye only make them,
Then leave them.

DOGE (*rising*).

Sirs, I am ready.

BARBARIGO.

No—not now.

LOREDANO.

Yet 'twas important.

DOGE.

If 'twas so, I can
Only repeat—I am ready.

BARBARIGO.

It shall not be
Just now, though Venice totter'd o'er the deep
Like a frail vessel. I respect your griefs.

DOGE.

I thank you. If the tidings which you bring

Are evil, you may say them ; nothing further
Can touch me more than him thou look'st on
there :
If they be good, say on ; you need not *fear*
That they can *comfort* me.

BARBARIGO.

I would they could!

DOGE.

I spoke not to *you*, but to Loredano.
He understands me.

MARINA.

Ah! I thought it would be so.

DOGE.

What mean you?

MARINA.

Lo! there is the blood beginning
To flow through the dead lips of Foscari—
The body bleeds in presence of the assassin.
[*To* LOREDANO.
Thou cowardly murderer by law, behold
How death itself bears witness to thy deeds!

DOGE.

My child! this is a phantasy of grief.

Bear hence the body. [*To his attendants.*] Signors,
if it please you,
Within an hour I'll hear you.

[*Exeunt* DOGE, MARINA, *and attendants with the body.*]

[*Manent* LOREDANO *and* BARBARIGO.

BARBARIGO.

He must not
Be troubled now.

LOREDANO.

He said himself that nought
Could give him trouble farther.

BARBARIGO.

These are words;
But grief is lonely, and the breaking in
Upon it barbarous.

LOREDANO.

Sorrow preys upon
Its solitude, and nothing more diverts it
From its sad visions of the other world
Than calling it at moments back to this.
The busy have no time for tears.

BARBARIGO.

You would deprive this old man of all business?

LOREDANO.

The thing's decreed. The giunta and "the Ten'
Have made it law: who shall oppose that law?

BARBARIGO.

Humanity!

LOREDANO.

Because his son is dead?

BARBARIGO.

And yet unburied.

LOREDANO.

Had we known this when
The act was passing, it might have suspended
Its passage, but impedes it not—once past.

BARBARIGO.

I'll not consent.

LOREDANO.

You have consented to
All that's essential—leave the rest to me.

BARBARIGO.

Why press his abdication now?

LOREDANO.

The feelings

Of private passion may not interrupt
The public benefit; and what the state
Decides to-day must not give way before
To-morrow for a natural accident.

BARBARIGO.

You have a son.

LOREDANO.

I *have*—and *had* a father.

BARBARIGO.

Still so inexorable?

LOREDANO.

Still.

BARBARIGO.

But let him
Inter his son before we press upon him
This edict.

LOREDANO.

Let him call up into life
My sire and uncle—I consent. Men may,
Even aged men, be, or appear to be,
Sires of a hundred sons, but cannot kindle
An atom of their ancestors from earth.
The victims are not equal: he has seen
His sons expire by natural deaths, and I

My sires by violent and mysterious maladies.
I used no poison, bribed no subtle master
Of the destructive art of healing, to
Shorten the path to the eternal cure.
His sons, and he had four, are dead, without
My dabbling in vile drugs

BARBARIGO.

And art thou sure
He dealt in such?

LOREDANO.

Most sure.

BARBARIGO.

And yet he seems
All openness.

LOREDANO.

And so he seem'd not long
Ago to Carmagnuola.

BARBARIGO.

The attainted
And foreign traitor?

LOREDANO.

Even so: when *he*,
After the very night in which "the Ten"
(Join'd with the Doge) decided his destruction,

Met the great Duke at daybreak with a jest,
Demanding whether he should augur him
"The good day or good night?" his Doge-ship
answer'd,
"That he in truth had pass'd a night of vigil,
"In which (he added with a gracious smile),
"There often has been question about you."*
'Twas true; the question was the death resolved
Of Carmagnuola, eight months ere he died;
And the old Doge, who knew him doom'd, smiled
on him
With deadly cozenage, eight long months before-
hand—
Eight months of such hypocrisy as is
Learnt but in eighty years. Brave Carmagnuola
Is dead; so is young Foscari and his brethren—
I never *smiled* on *them*.

BARBARIGO.

Was Carmagnuola
Your friend?

LOREDANO.

He was the safeguard of the city.

* An historical fact.

In early life its foe, but, in his manhood,
Its saviour first, then victim.

BARBARIGO.

Ah! that seems
The penalty of saving cities. He
Whom we now act against not only saved
Our own, but added others to her sway.

LOREDANO.

The Romans (and we ape them) gave a crown
To him who took a city; and they gave
A crown to him who saved a citizen
In battle: the rewards are equal. Now,
If we should measure forth the cities taken
By the Doge Foscari, with citizens
Destroy'd by him, or *through* him, the account
Were fearfully against him, although narrow'd
To private havoc, such as between him
And my dead father.

BARBARIGO.

Are you then thus fix'd?

LOREDANO.

Why, what should change me?

BARBARIGO.

That which changes me

But you, I know, are marble to retain
A feud. But when all is accomplish'd, when
The old man is deposed, his name degraded,
His sons all dead, his family depress'd,
And you and yours triumphant, shall you sleep?

LOREDANO.

More soundly.

BARBARIGO.

That's an error, and you'll find it
Ere you sleep with your fathers.

LOREDANO.

They sleep not
In their accelerated graves, nor will
Till Foscari fills his. Each night I see them
Stalk frowning round my couch, and, pointing towards
The ducal palace, marshal me to vengeance

BARBARIGO.

Fancy's distemperature! There is no passion
More spectral or fantastical than hate;
Not even its opposite, Love, so peoples air
With phantoms, as this madness of the heart.

Enter an Officer.

LOREDANO.

Where go you, sirrah?

OFFICER.

By the ducal order
To forward the preparatory rites
For the late Foscari's interment.

BARBARIGO.

Their
Vault has been often open'd of late years.

LOREDANO.

'Twill be full soon, and may be closed for ever.

OFFICER.

May I pass on?

LOREDANO.

You may.

BARBARIGO.

How bears the Doge
This last calamity?

OFFICER.

With desperate firmness.
In presence of another he says little,
But I perceive his lips move now and then
And once or twice I heard him, from the adjoining

Apartment, mutter forth the words—"My son!"
Scarce audibly. I must proceed.

[*Exit Officer.*

BARBARIGO.

This stroke
Will move all Venice in his favour.

LOREDANO.

Right!
We must be speedy: let us call together
The delegates appointed to convey
The Council's resolution.

BARBARIGO.

I protest
Against it at this moment.

LOREDANO.

As you please—
I'll take their voices on it ne'ertheless,
And see whose most may sway them, yours or mine.

[*Exeunt* BARBARIGO *and* LOREDANO.

ACT V.

SCENE I.

The DOGE's *Apartment.*

The DOGE *and Attendants.*

ATTENDANT.

My lord, the deputation is in waiting;
But add, that if another hour would better
Accord with your will, they will make it theirs.

DOGE.

To me all hours are like. Let them approach.
[*Exit Attendant.*

AN OFFICER.

Prince! I have done your bidding.

DOGE.

What command?

OFFICER.

A melancholy one—to call the attendance
Of——

DOGE.

True—true—true: I crave your pardon. I

Begin to fail in apprehension, and
Wax very old—old almost as my years.
Till now I fought them off, but they begin
To overtake me.

Enter the Deputation, consisting of six of the Signory, and the Chief of the Ten.

Noble men, your pleasure!

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

In the first place, the Council doth condole
With the Doge on his late and private grief.

DOGE.

No more—no more of that.

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

Will not the Duke
Accept the homage of respect?

DOGE.

I do
Accept it as 'tis given—proceed.

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

"The Ten,"
With a selected giunta from the senate
Of twenty-five of the best born patricians,
Having deliberated on the state

Of the republic, and the o'erwhelming cares
Which, at this moment, doubly must oppress
Your years, so long devoted to your country,
Have judged it fitting, with all reverence,
Now to solicit from your wisdom (which
Upon reflection must accord in this),
The resignation of the ducal ring,
Which you have worn so long and venerably;
And, to prove that they are not ungrateful nor
Cold to your years and services, they add
An appanage of twenty hundred golden
Ducats, to make retirement not less splendid
Than should become a sovereign's retreat.

DOGE.

Did I hear rightly?

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

Need I say again?

DOGE.

No.—Have you done?

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

I have spoken. Twenty-four
Hours are accorded you to give an answer.

DOGE.

I shall not need so many seconds.

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

We

Will now retire.

DOGE.

Stay! Four and twenty hours

Will alter nothing which I have to say.

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

Speak!

DOGE.

When I twice before reiterated

My wish to abdicate, it was refused me;

And not alone refused, but ye exacted

An oath from me that I would never more

Renew this instance. I have sworn to die

In full exertion of the functions which

My country call'd me here to exercise,

According to my honour and my conscience—

I cannot break *my* oath.

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

Reduce us not

To the alternative of a decree,

Instead of your compliance.

DOGE.

Providence

Prolongs my days to prove and chasten me,
But ye have no right to reproach my length
Of days, since every hour has been the country's.
I am ready to lay down my life for her,
As I have laid down dearer things than life:
But for my dignity—I hold it of
The *whole* republic; when the *general* will
Is manifest, then you shall all be answer'd.

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

We grieve for such an answer; but it cannot
Avail you aught.

DOGE.

I can submit to all things,
But nothing will advance; no, not a moment.
What you decree—decree.

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

With this, then, must we
Return to those who sent us?

DOGE

You have heard me.

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

With all due reverence we retire.

[*Exeunt the Deputation, etc.*

Enter an Attendant.

ATTENDANT.

My lord,
The noble dame Marina craves an audience.

DOGE.

My time is hers.

Enter MARINA.

MARINA.

My lord, if I intrude—
Perhaps you fain would be alone?

DOGE.

Alone!
Alone, come all the world around me, I
Am now and evermore. But we will bear it.

MARINA.

We will; and for the sake of those who are,
Endeavour——Oh my husband!

DOGE.

Give it way;
I cannot comfort thee.

MARINA.

He might have lived,

So form'd for gentle privacy of life,
So loving, so beloved; the native of
Another land, and who so blest and blessing
As my poor Foscari? Nothing was wanting
Unto his happiness and mine save not
To be Venetian.

DOGE.

Or a prince's son.

MARINA.

Yes; all things which conduce to other men's
Imperfect happiness or high ambition,
By some strange destiny, to him proved deadly.
The country and the people whom he loved,
The prince of whom he was the elder born,
And——

DOGE.

Soon may be a prince no longer.

MARINA.

How?

DOGE.

They have taken my son from me, and now aim
At my too long worn diadem and ring.
Let them resume the gewgaws!

MARINA.

Oh the tyrants!
In such an hour too!

DOGE.

'Tis the fittest time:
An hour ago I should have felt it.

MARINA.

And
Will you not now resent it?—Oh for vengeance!
But he, who, had he been enough protected,
Might have repaid protection in this moment,
Cannot assist his father.

DOGE.

Nor should do so
Against his country, had he a thousand lives
Instead of that——

MARINA.

They tortured from him. This
May be pure patriotism. I am a woman:
To me my husband and my children were
Country and home. I loved *him*—how I loved
him!
I have seen him pass through such ordeal as

The old martyrs would have shrunk from: he is
gone,
And I, who would have given my blood for him,
Have nought to give but tears! But could I
compass
The retribution of his wrongs!—Well, well,
I have sons who shall be men.

DOGE.

Your grief distracts you.

MARINA.

I thought I could have borne it, when I saw him
Bow'd down by such oppression; yes, I thought
That I would rather look upon his corse
Than his prolong'd captivity:—I am punish'd
For that thought now. Would I were in his grave!

DOGE.

I must look on him once more.

MARINA.

Come with me!

DOGE.

Is be——

MARINA.

Our bridal bed is now his bier.

DOGE.

And he is in his shroud?

MARINA.

Come, come, old man!

[*Exeunt the* DOGE *and* MARINA.

Enter BARBARIGO *and* LOREDANO.

BARBARIGO (*to an Attendant*).

Where is the Doge?

ATTENDANT.

This instant retired hence
With the illustrious lady his son's widow.

LOREDANO.

Where?

ATTENDANT.

To the chamber where the body lies.

BARBARIGO.

Let us return then.

LOREDANO.

You forget, you cannot.
We have the implicit order of the giunta
To await their coming here, and join them in
Their office: they'll be here soon after us.

BARBARIGO.

And will they press their answer on the Doge?

LOREDANO.

'Twas his own wish that all should be done
promptly.
He answer'd quickly, and must so be answer'd;
His dignity is look'd to, his estate
Cared for—what would he more?

BARBARIGO.

Die in his robes.
He could not have lived long; but I have done
My best to save his honours, and opposed
This proposition to the last, though vainly.
Why would the general vote compel me hither?

LOREDANO

'Twas fit that some one of such different thoughts
From ours should be a witness, lest false tongues
Should whisper that a harsh majority
Dreaded to have its acts beheld by others.

BARBARIGO.

And not less, I must needs think, for the sake
Of humbling me for my vain opposition.
You are ingenious, Loredano, in
Your modes of vengeance, nay, poetical,

A very Ovid in the art of *hating;*
'Tis thus (although a secondary object,
Yet hate has microscopic eyes) to you
I owe, by way of foil to the more zealous,
This undesired association in
Your giunta's duties.

LOREDANO.

How!—*my* giunta!

BARBARIGO.

Yours!
They speak your language, watch your nod, approve
Your plans, and do your work. Are they not *yours?*

LOREDANO.

You talk unwarily. 'Twere best they hear not
This from you.

BARBARIGO.

Oh! they'll hear as much one day
From louder tongues than mine: they have gone beyond
Even their exorbitance of power; and when
This happens in the most contemn'd and abject
States, stung humanity will rise to check it.

LOREDANO.

You talk but idly.

BARBARIGO.

That remains for proof.

Here come our colleagues.

Enter the Deputation as before.

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

Is the Duke aware

We seek his presence?

ATTENDANT.

He shall be inform'd.

[*Exit Attendant.*

BARBARIGO.

The Duke is with his son.

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

If it be so,

We will remit him till the rites are over.
Let us return. 'Tis time enough to-morrow.

LOREDANO (*aside to* BARBARIGO).

Now the rich man's hell-fire upon your tongue,
Unquench'd, unquenchable! I'll have it torn
From its vile babbling roots, till you shall utter

Nothing but sobs through blood, for this! Sage
signors,
I pray ye be not hasty. [*Aloud to the others.*

BARBARIGO.

But be human!

LOREDANO.

See, the Duke comes!

Enter the DOGE.

DOGE.

I have obey'd your summons.

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

We come once more to urge our past request.

DOGE.

And I to answer.

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

What?

DOGE.

My only answer.
You have heard it.

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

Hear *you* then the last decree,
Definitive and absolute!

DOGE.

To the point—
To the point! I know of old the forms of office,
And gentle preludes to strong acts—Go on!

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

You are no longer Doge; you are released
From your imperial oath as sovereign;
Your ducal robes must be put off; but for
Your services, the state allots the appanage
Already mention'd in our former congress.
Three days are left you to remove from hence,
Under the penalty to see confiscated
All your own private fortune.

DOGE.

That last clause,
I am proud to say, would not enrich the treasury.

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

Your answer, Duke!

LOREDANO.

Your answer, Francis Foscari!

DOGE.

If I could have foreseen that my old age
Was prejudicial to the state, the chief
Of the republic never would have shown

Himself so far ungrateful as to place
His own high dignity before his country;
But this *life* having been so many years
Not useless to that country, I would fain
Have consecrated my last moments to her.
But the decree being render'd, I obey.

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

If you would have the three days named extended,
We willingly will lengthen them to eight,
As sign of our esteem.

DOGE.

Not eight hours, signor,
Nor even eight minutes.—There's the ducal ring,
[*Taking off his ring and cap.*
And there the ducal diadem. And so
The Adriatic's free to wed another.

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

Yet go not forth so quickly.

DOGE.

I am old, sir,
And even to move but slowly must begin
To move betimes. Methinks I see amongst you
A face I know not—Senator! your name,
You, by your garb, Chief of the Forty!

MEMMO.

Signor,

I am the son of Marco Memmo

DOGE.

Ah!

Your father was my friend.—But *sons* and *fathers!*—

What, ho! my servants there!

ATTENDANT.

My prince!

DOGE.

No prince—

There are the princes of the prince!

[*Pointing to the Ten's Deputation*

Prepare

To part from hence upon the instant.

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

Why

So rashly? 'twill give scandal.

DOGE.

Answer that,

[*To the Ten.*

It is your province.—Sirs, bestir yourselves:

[*To the Servants.*

There is one burthen which I beg you bear
With care, although 'tis past all farther harm—
But I will look to that myself.

BARBARIGO.

He means
The body of his son.

DOGE.

And call Marina,
My daughter!

Enter MARINA.

DOGE.

Get thee ready, we must mourn
Elsewhere.

MARINA.

And every where.

DOGE.

True; but in freedom,
Without these jealous spies upon the great.
Signors, you may depart: what would you more?
We are going: do you fear that we shall bear
The palace with us? Its *old* walls, ten times
As *old* as I am, and I'm very old,
Have served you, so have I, and I and they
Could tell a tale; but I invoke them not

To fall upon you! else they would, as erst
The pillars of stone Dagon's temple on
The Israelite and his Philistine foes.
Such power I do believe there might exist
In such a curse as mine, provoked by such
As you, but I curse not. Adieu, good signors!
May the next duke be better than the present!

LOREDANO.

The *present* duke is Paschal Malipiero.

DOGE.

Not till I pass the threshold of these doors.

LOREDANO.

Saint Mark's great bell is soon about to toll
For his inauguration.

DOGE.

Earth and heaven!
Ye will reverberate this peal; and I
Live to hear this!—the first doge who e'er heard
Such sound for his successor! Happier he,
My attainted predecessor, stern Faliero—
This insult at the least was spared him.

LOREDANO.

What!
Do you regret a traitor?

DOGE.

No—I merely
Envy the dead.

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

My lord, if you indeed
Are bent upon this rash abandonment
Of the state's palace, at the least retire
By the private staircase, which conducts you towards
The landing-place of the canal.

DOGE.

No. I
Will now descend the stairs by which I mounted
To sovereignty—the Giant's Stairs, on whose
Broad eminence I was invested duke.
My services have call'd me up those steps,
The malice of my foes will drive me down them.
There five and thirty years ago was I
Install'd, and traversed these same halls from which
I never thought to be divorced except
A corse—a corse, it might be, fighting for them—
But not push'd hence by fellow citizens.
But, come; my son and I will go together—
He to his grave, and I to pray for mine.

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

What, thus in public?

DOGE.

I was publicly
Elected, and so will I be deposed.
Marina! art thou willing?

MARINA.

Here's my arm!

DOGE.

And here my *staff*: thus propp'd will I go forth.

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

It must not be—the people will perceive it.

DOGE.

The people!—There's no people, you well know it,
Else you dare not deal thus by them or me.
There is a *populace*, perhaps, whose looks
May shame you; but they dare not groan nor curse you,
Save with their hearts and eyes.

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

You speak in passion,
Else——

DOGE.

You have reason. I have spoken much

More than my wont: it is a foible which
Was not of mine, but more excuses you,
Inasmuch as it shows that I approach
A dotage which may justify this deed
Of yours, although the law does not, nor will.
Farewell, sirs!

BARBARIGO.

You shall not depart without
An escort fitting past and present rank.
We will accompany, with due respect,
The Doge unto his private palace. Say!
My brethren, will we not?

DIFFERENT VOICES.

Ay!—Ay!

DOGE.

You shall not
Stir—in my train, at least. I enter'd here
As sovereign—I go out as citizen
By the same portals, but as citizen.
All these vain ceremonies are base insults,
Which only ulcerate the heart the more,
Applying poisons there as antidotes.
Pomp is for princes—I am *none!*—That's false,
I *am*, but only to these gates.—Ah!

LOREDANO.

Hark!

[*The great bell of St. Mark's tolls.*

BARBARIGO.

The bell!

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

St. Mark's, which tolls for the election
Of Malipiero.

DOGE.

Well I recognize
The sound! I heard it once, but once before,
And that is five and thirty years ago;
Even *then* I *was not young.*

BARBARIGO.

Sit down, my lord!
You tremble.

DOGE.

'Tis the knell of my poor boy!
My heart aches bitterly.

BARBARIGO.

I pray you sit.

DOGE.

No; my seat here has been a throne till now.
Marina! let us go.

MARINA.

Most readily.

DOGE (*walks a few steps, then stops.*)

I feel athirst—will no one bring me here
A cup of water?

BARBARIGO.

I——

MARINA.

And I——

LOREDANO.

And I——

[*The* DOGE *takes a goblet from the hand of* LOREDANO.

DOGE.

I take *yours*, Loredano, from the hand
Most fit for such an hour as this.

LOREDANO.

Why so?

DOGE.

'Tis said that our Venetian crystal has
Such pure antipathy to poisons, as
To burst if aught of venom touches it.
You bore this goblet, and it is not broken.

LOREDANO.

Well, sir!

DOGE.

Then it is false, or you are true.
For my own part, I credit neither; 'tis
An idle legend.

MARINA.

You talk wildly, and
Had better now be seated, nor as yet
Depart. Ah! now you look as look'd my husband!

BARBARIGO.

He sinks!—support him!—quick—a chair—support him!

DOGE.

The bell tolls on!—let's hence—my brain's on fire!

BARBARIGO.

I do beseech you, lean upon us!

DOGE.

No!
A sovereign should die standing. My poor boy!
Off with your arms!—*That bell!*

[*The* DOGE *drops down and dies.*]

MARINA.

My God! My God!

BARBARIGO (*to* LOREDANO).

Behold! your work's completed!

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

Is there then
No aid? Call in assistance!

ATTENDANT.

'Tis all over.

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

If it be so, at least his obsequies
Shall be such as befits his name and nation,
His rank and his devotion to the duties
Of the realm, while his age permitted him
To do himself and them full justice. Brethren,
Say, shall it not be so?

BARBARIGO.

He has not had
The misery to die a subject where
He reign'd: then let his funeral rites be princely.

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

We are agreed, then?

All, except LOREDANO, *answer*

Yes.

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

Heaven's peace be with him!

MARINA.

Signors, your pardon: this is mockery.
Juggle no more with that poor remnant, which,
A moment since, while yet it had a soul,
(A soul by whom you have increased your empire,
And made your power as proud as was his glory),
You banish'd from his palace, and tore down
From his high place with such relentless coldness,
And now, when he can neither know these honours,
Nor would accept them if he could, you, signors,
Purpose, with idle and superfluous pomp,
To make a pageant over what you trampled.
A princely funeral will be your reproach,
And not his honour.

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

Lady, we revoke not
Our purposes so readily.

MARINA.

I know it,
As far as touches torturing the living.
I thought the dead had been beyond even *you*,

Though (some, no doubt), consign'd to powers
which may
Resemble that you exercise on earth.
Leave him to me; you would have done so for
His dregs of life, which you have kindly shorten'd:
It is my last of duties, and may prove
A dreary comfort in my desolation.
Grief is fantastical, and loves the dead,
And the apparel of the grave.

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

Do you
Pretend still to this office?

MARINA.

I do, signor.
Though his possessions have been all consumed
In the state's service, I have still my dowry,
Which shall be consecrated to his rites,
And those of—— [*She stops with agitation.*

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

Best retain it for your children.

MARINA.

Ay, they are fatherless, I thank you.

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

We

Cannot comply with your request. His relics
Shall be exposed with wonted pomp, and follow'd
Unto their home by the new Doge, not clad
As *Doge*, but simply as a senator.

MARINA.

I have heard of murderers, who have interr'd
Their victims; but ne'er heard, until this hour,
Of so much splendour in hypocrisy
O'er those they slew. I've heard of widows' tears—
Alas! I have shed some—always thanks to you!
I've heard of *heirs* in sables—you have left none
To the deceased, so you would act the part
Of such. Well, sirs, your will be done! as one
day,
I trust, Heaven's will be done too!

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

Know you, lady,
To whom ye speak, and perils of such speech?

MARINA.

I know the former better than yourselves;
The latter—like yourselves; and can face both.
Wish you more funerals?

BARBARIGO.

Heed not her rash words;

Her circumstances must excuse her bearing.

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

We will not note them down.

BARBARIGO (*turning to* LOREDANO, *who is writing upon his tablets*).

What art thou writing,
With such an earnest brow, upon thy tablets?

LOREDANO (*pointing to the* DOGE'S *body*).

That *he* has paid me![*]

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

What debt did he owe you?

LOREDANO.

A long and just one; Nature's debt and *mine*.

[*Curtain falls.*

[*] "*L'ha pagata.*" An historical fact. See the History of Venice, by P. Daru, page 411, vol 2d.

APPENDIX.

EXTRAIT DE L'HISTOIRE DE LA RÉPUBLIQUE DE VENISE, PAR P. DARU DE L'ACADÉMIE FRANÇAISE. TOM. II.

DEPUIS trente ans, la république n'avait pas déposé les armes. Elle avait acquis les provinces de Brescia, de Bergame, de Crême, et la principauté de Ravenne.

Mais ces guerres continuelles faisaient beaucoup de malheureux et de mécontents. Le doge François Foscari, à qui on ne pouvait pardonner d'en avoir été le promoteur, manifesta une seconde fois, en 1442, et probablement avec plus de sincérité que la première, l'intention d'abdiquer sa dignité. Le conseil s'y refusa encore. On avait exigé de lui le serment de ne plus quitter le dogat. Il était déjà avancé dans la vieillesse, conservant cependant beaucoup de force de tête et de caractère, et jouissant de la gloire d'avoir vu la république étendre au loin les limites de ses domaines pendant son administration. Au milieu de ces prospérités, de grands chagrins vinrent mettre à l'épreuve la fermeté de son âme.

Son fils, Jacques Foscari, fut accusé, en 1445, d'avoir reçu des présents de quelques princes ou seigneurs étrangers, notamment, disait-on, du duc de Milan, Philippe

Visconti. C'était non-seulement une bassesse, mais une infraction des lois positives de la république.

Le conseil des dix traita cette affaire comme s'il se fût agi d'un délit commis par un particulier obscur. L'accusé fut amené devant ses juges, devant le doge, qui ne crut pas pouvoir s'abstenir de présider le tribunal. Là, il fut interrogé, appliqué à la question*, déclaré coupable, et il entendit, de la bouche de son père, l'arrêt qui le condamnait à un bannissement perpétuel, et le réléguait à Naples de Romanie, pour y finir ses jours.

Embarqué sur une galère pour se rendre au lieu de son exil, il tomba malade à Trieste. Les sollicitations du doge obtinrent, non sans difficulté, qu'on lui assignât une autre résidence. Enfin le conseil des dix lui permit de se retirer à Trévise, en lui imposant l'obligation d'y rester sous peine de mort, et de se présenter tous les jours devant le gouverneur.

Il y était depuis cinq ans, lorsqu'un des chefs du conseil des dix fut assassiné. Les soupçons se portèrent sur lui: un de ses domestiques qu'on avait vu à Venise fut arrêté et subit la torture. Les bourreaux ne purent lui arracher aucun aveu. Ce terrible tribunal se fit amener le maître, le soumit aux mêmes épreuves; il résista à tous les tourments, ne cessant d'attester son innocence;† mais on ne

* E datagli la corda per avere da lui la verità, chiamato il consiglio de' dieci colla giunta, nel quale fu messer lo doge, fu sentenziato. (Marin Sanuto Vite de' Duchi, F. Foscari.)

† E fù tormentato nè mai confessò cosa alcuna, pure parve al consiglio de' dieci di confinarlo in vita alla Canea. (Ibid.) Voici le texte du jugement: "Cum Jacobus Foscari per occasionem percussionis et mortis Hermolai Donati fuit retentus et examinatus, et propter significationes, testificationes,

vit dans cette constance que de l'obstination ; de ce qu'il taisait le fait, on conclut que ce fait existait : on attribua sa fermeté à la magie, et on le relégua à la Canée. De cette terre lointaine, le banni, digne alors de quelque pitié, ne cessait d'écrire à son père, à ses amis, pour obtenir quelque adoucissement à sa déportation. N'obtenant rien, et sachant que la terreur qu'inspirait le conseil des dix ne lui permettait pas d'espérer de trouver dans Venise une seule voix qui s'élevât en sa faveur, il fit une lettre pour le nouveau duc de Milan, par laquelle, au nom des bons offices que Sforce avait reçus du chef de la république, il implorait son intervention en faveur d'un innocent, du fils du doge.

Cette lettre, selon quelques historiens, fut confiée à un marchand qui avait promis de la faire parvenir au duc,

et scripturas quæ habentur contra eum, clare apparet ipsum esse reum criminis prædicti, sed propter incantationes et verba quæ sibi reperta sunt, de quibus existit indicia manifesta, videtur propter obstinatam mentem suam, non esse possibile extrahere ab ipso illam veritatem, quæ clara est per scripturas et per testificationes, quoniam in fune aliquam nec vocem, nec gemitum, sed solum intra dentes voces ipse videtur et auditur infra se loqui, etc. . . . Tamen non est standum in istis terminis, propter honorem statûs nostri et pro multis respectibus, præsertim quod regimen nostrum occupatur in hac re et qui interdictum est amplius progredere. vadit pars quod dictus Jacobus Foscari, propter ea quæ habentur de illo, mittatur in confinium in civitate Caneæ, etc. Notice sur le procès de Jacques Focari dans un volume intitulé, Raccolta di memorie storiche e annedote, per formar la Storia dell' excellentissimo consiglio di X dalla sua prima instituzione sino a' giorni nostri, con le diverse variazioni e riforme nelle varie epoche successe. (Archives de Venise.)

mais qui, trop averti de ce qu'il avait à craindre en se rendant l'intermédiaire d'une pareille correspondance, se hâta, en débarquant à Venise, de la remettre au chef du tribunal. Une autre version, qui paraît plus sûre, rapporte que la lettre fut surprise par un espion, attaché aux pas de l'exilé.*

Ce fut un nouveau délit dont on eut à punir Jacques Foscari. Réclamer la protection d'un prince étranger était un crime, dans un sujet de la république. Une galère partit sur-le-champ pour l'amener dans les prisons de Venise. A son arrivée il fut soumis à l'estrapade†. C'était une singulière destinée pour le citoyen d'une république et pour le fils d'un prince, d'être trois fois dans sa vie appliqué à la question. Cette fois la torture était d'autant plus odieuse, qu'elle n'avait point d'objet, le fait qu'on avait à lui reprocher étant incontestable.

Quand on demanda à l'accusé, dans les intervalles que les bourreaux lui accordaient, pourquoi il avait écrit la lettre qu'on lui produisait, il répondit que c'était précisément parce qu'il ne doutait pas qu'elle ne tombât entre les mains du tribunal, que toute autre voie lui avait été fermée pour faire parvenir ses réclamations, qu'il s'attendait bien qu'on le ferait amener à Venise, mais qu'il avait tout risqué pour avoir la consolation de voir sa femme, son père, et sa mère encore une fois.

Sur cette naïve déclaration, on confirma sa sentence d'exil; mais on l'aggrava, en y ajoutant qu'il serait retenu en prison pendant un an. Cette rigueur, dont on usait

* La notice citée ci-dessus qui rapporte les actes de cette procédure.

† Ebbe prima per sapere la verità trenta squassi di corda. (Marin Sanuto, Vite de' Duchi. F. Foscari.)

envers un malheureux, était sans doute odieuse; mais cette politique, qui défendait à tous les citoyens de faire intervenir les étrangers dans les affaires intérieures de la république, était sage. Elle était chez eux une maxime de gouvernement et une maxime inflexible. L'historien Paul Morosini* a conté que l'empereur Frédéric III, pendant qu'il était l'hôte des Vénitiens, demanda comme une faveur particulière, l'admission d'un citoyen dans le grand conseil, et la grâce d'un ancien gouverneur de Candie, gendre du doge, et banni pour sa mauvaise administration, sans pouvoir obtenir ni l'une ni l'autre.

Cependant on ne put refuser au condamné la permission de voir sa femme, ses enfans, ses parents, qu'il allait quitter pour toujours. Cette dernière entrevue même fut accompagnée de cruauté, par la sévère circonspection, qui retenait les épanchemens de la douleur paternelle et conjugale. Ce ne fut point dans l'intérieur de leur appartement, ce fut dans une des grandes salles du palais, qu'une femme, accompagnée de ses quatre fils, vint faire les derniers adieux à son mari, qu'un père octogénaire et la dogaresse accablée d'infirmités, jouirent un moment de la triste consolation de mêler leurs larmes à celles de leur exile. Il se jeta à leurs genoux en leur tendant des mains disloquées par la torture, pour les supplier de solliciter quelque adoucissement à la sentence qui venait d'être prononcée contre lui. Son père eut le courage de lui répondre : "Non, mon fils, respectez votre arrêt, et obéissez sans murmure à la seigneurie."† A ces mots

* Historia di Venezia, lib. 23.

† Marin Sanuto, dans sa chronique, Vite de' Duchi, se sert ici sans en avoir eu l'intention d'une expression assez

il se sépara de l'infortuné, qui fut sur-le-champ embarqué pour Candie.

L'antiquité vit avec autant d'horreur que d'admiration un père condamnant ses fils évidemment coupables. Elle hésita pour qualifier de vertu sublime ou de férocité cet effort qui paraît au-dessus de la nature humaine;* mais ici, où la première faute n'était qu'une faiblesse, où la seconde n'était pas prouvée, où la troisième n'avait rien de criminel, comment concevoir la constance d'un père, qui voit torturer trois fois son fils unique, qui l'entend condamner sans preuves et qui n'éclate pas en plaintes; qui ne l'aborde que pour lui montrer un visage plus austère qu'attendri, et qui, au moment de s'en séparer pour jamais, lui interdit les murmures et jusqu'à l'espérance? Comment expliquer une si cruelle circons-

energique · "Il doge era vecchio in decrepita età e camminava con una mazzetta E quando gli andò parlogli molto constantemente che parea che non fosse suo figliuolo, licet fosse figliuolo unico, e Jacopo disse, messer padre, vi prego che procuriate per me, acciocchè io torni a casa mia. Il doge disse Jacopo, va e obbedisci a quello che vuole la terra, e noncercar più oltre."

* Cela fut un acte que l'on ne sçauroit ny suffisament louer, ny assez blasmer: car, ou c'estoit une excellence de vertu, qui rendoit ainsi son cœur impassible, ou une violence de passion qui le rendoit insensible, dont ne l'une ne l'autre n'est chose petite, ains surpassant l'ordinaire d'humaine nature et tenant ou de la divinité ou de la bestialité. Mais il est plus raisonnable que le jugement des hommes s'accorde à sa gloire, que la faiblesse des jugeans fasse descroire sa vertu. Mais pour lors quand il se fut retiré, tout le monde demoura sur la place, comme transy d'horreur et de frayeur, par un long temps sans mot dire, pour avoir veu ce qui avoit été fait. (Plutarque, Valerius Publicola.)

jection, si ce n'est en avouant, à notre honte, que la tyrannie peut obtenir de l'espèce humaine les mêmes efforts que la vertu? La servitude aurait-elle son héroïsme comme la liberté?

Quelque temps après ce jugement, on découvrit le véritable auteur de l'assassinat, dont Jacques Foscari portait la peine, mais il n'était plus temps de réparer cette atroce injustice, le malheureux était mort dans sa prison.

Il me reste à raconter la suite des malheurs du père. L'histoire les attribue à l'impatience qu'avaient ses ennemis et ses rivaux de voir vaquer sa place. Elle accuse formellement Jacques Loredan, l'un des chefs du conseil des dix, de s'être livré contre ce vieillard aux conseils d'une haine héréditaire, et qui depuis long-temps divisait leurs maisons*.

François Foscari avait essayé de la faire cesser, en offrant sa fille à l'illustre amiral Pierre Loredan, pour un de ses fils. L'alliance avait été rejetée, et l'inimitié des deux familles s'en était accrue. Dans tous les conseils, dans toutes les affaires, le doge trouvait toujours les Loredan prêts à combattre ses propositions ou ses intérêts. Il lui échappa un jour de dire qu'il ne se croirait réellement prince, que lorsque Pierre Loredan aurait cessé de vivre. Cet amiral mourut quelque temps après d'une incommodité assez prompte qu'on ne put expliquer. Il n'en fallut pas davantage aux malveillants pour insinuer

* Je suis principalement dans ce récit une relation manuscrite de la déposition de François Foscari qui est dans le volume intitulé, Raccolta di memorie storiche e annedote, per formar la Storia dell' eccellentissimo consiglio di X. (Archives de Venise.)

que François Foscari, ayant desiré cette mort, pouvait bien l'avoir hâtée.

Ces bruits s'accréditèrent encore lorsqu'on vit aussi périr subitement Marc Loredan, frère de Pierre, et cela dans le moment où, en sa qualité d'avogador, il instruisait un procès contre André Donato, gendre du doge, accusé de péculat. On écrivit sur la tombe de l'amiral qu'il avait été enlevé à la patrie par le poison.

Il n'y avait aucune preuve, aucun indice contre François Foscari, aucune raison même de le soupçonner. Quand sa vie entière n'aurait pas démenti une imputation aussi odieuse, il savait que son rang ne lui promettait ni l'impunité ni même l'indulgence. La mort tragique de l'un de ses prédécesseurs l'en avertissait, et il n'avait que trop d'exemples domestiques du soin que le conseil des dix prenait d'humilier le chef de la république.

Cependant, Jacques Loredan, fils de Pierre, croyait ou feignait de croire avoir à venger les pertes de sa famille.* Dans ses livres de comptes (car il faisait le commerce, comme à cette époque presque tous les patriciens,) il avait inscrit de sa propre main le doge au nombre de ses débiteurs, pour la mort, y était-il dit, de mon père et de mon oncle.† De l'autre côté du registre, il avait laissé une page en blanc, pour y faire mention du recouvrement de cette dette, et en effet, après la perte du doge, il écrivit sur son registre : il me l'a payée, l'ha pagata.

* Hasce tamen injurias quamvis imaginarias non tam ad animum revocaverat Jacobus Lauredanus defunctorum nepos, quam in abecedarium vindictam opportuna. (Palazzi Fasti ducales.)

† Ibid. et l'Histoire Vénitienne de Vianolo.

Jacques Loredan fut élu membre du conseil des dix, en devint un des trois chefs, et se promit bien de profiter de cette occasion pour accomplir la vengeance qu'il méditait.

Le doge en sortant de la terrible épreuve qu'il venait de subir, pendant le procès de son fils, s'était retiré au fond de son palais, incapable de se livrer aux affaires, consumé de chagrins, accablé de vieillesse, il ne se montrait plus en public, ni même dans les conseils. Cette retraite, si facile à expliquer dans un vieillard octogénaire si malheureux, déplut aux decemvirs, qui voulurent y voir un murmure contre leurs arrêts.

Loredan commença par se plaindre devant ses collègues du tort que les infirmités du doge, son absence des conseils, apportaient à l'expédition des affaires, il finit par hasarder et réussit à faire agréer la proposition de le déposer. Ce n'était pas la première fois que Venise avait pour prince un homme dans la caducité; l'usage et les lois y avaient pourvu; dans ces circonstances le doge était suppléé par le plus ancien du conseil. Ici, cela ne suffisait pas aux ennemis de Foscari. Pour donner plus de solennité à la délibération, le conseil des dix demanda une adjonction de vingt-cinq sénateurs; mais comme on n'en énonçait pas l'objet, et que le grand conseil était loin de le soupçonner, il se trouva que Marc Foscari, frère du doge, leur fut donné pour l'un des adjoints. Au lieu de l'admettre à la délibération, ou de réclamer contre ce choix, on enferma ce sénateur dans une chambre séparée, et on lui fit jurer de ne jamais parler de cette exclusion qu'il éprouvait, en lui déclarant qu'il y allait de sa vie; ce qui n'empêcha pas qu'on

n'inscrivît son nom au bas du décret, comme s'il y eût pris part*.

Quand on en vint à la délibération, Loredan la provoqua en ces termes.† " Si l'utilité publique doit imposer " silence à tous les intérêts privés, je ne doute pas que " nous ne prenions aujourd'hui une mesure que la patrie " réclame, que nous lui devons. Les états ne peuvent " se maintenir dans un ordre de choses immuable · vous " n'avez qu'à voir comme le nôtre est changé, et combien " il le serait davantage s'il n'y avait une autorité assez " ferme pour y porter remède. J'ai honte de vous faire " remarquer la confusion qui règne dans les conseils, le " désordre des délibérations, l'encombrement des af- " faires, et la légèreté avec laquelle les plus importantes " sont décidées ; la licence de notre jeunesse, le peu " d'assiduité des magistrats, l'introduction de nouveau- " tés dangereuses. Quel est l'effet de ces désordres? " de compromettre notre considération. Quelle en est " la cause? l'absence d'un chef capable de modérer les " uns, de diriger les autres, de donner l'exemple à tous, " et de maintenir la force des lois.

" Où est le temps où nos décrets étaient aussitôt exé- " cutés que rendus? Où François Carrare se trouvait " investi dans Padoue, avant de pouvoir être seulement " informé que nous voulions lui faire la guerre? nous " avons vu tout le contraire dans la dernière guerre contre

* Il faut cependant remarquer que dans la notice où l'on raconte ce fait, la délibération est rapportée, que les vingt-cinq adjoints y sont nommés, et que le nom de Marc Foscari ne s'y trouve pas.

† Cette harangue se lit dans la notice citée ci-dessus.

" le duc de Milan. Malheureuse la république qui est sans chef !

" Je ne vous rappelle pas tous ces inconvénients et leurs suites déplorables, pour vous affliger, pour vous effrayer, mais pour vous faire souvenir que vous êtes les maîtres, les conservateurs de cet état fondé par vos pères, et de la liberté que nous devons à leurs travaux, à leurs institutions. Ici, le mal indique le remède. Nous n'avons point de chef, il nous en faut un. Notre prince est notre ouvrage, nous avons donc le droit de juger son mérite quand il s'agit de l'élire, et son incapacité quand elle se manifeste. J'ajouterai que le peuple, encore bien qu'il n'ait pas le droit de prononcer sur les actions de ses maîtres, apprendra ce changement avec transport. C'est la providence, je n'en doute pas, qui lui inspire elle-même ces dispositions, pour vous avertir que la république réclame cette résolution, et que le sort de l'état est en vos mains."

Ce discours n'éprouva que de timides contradictions, cependant, la délibération dura huit jours. L'assemblée, ne se jugeant pas aussi sûre de l'approbation universelle que l'orateur voulait le lui faire croire, désirait que le doge donnât lui-même sa démission. Il l'avait déjà proposée deux fois, et on n'avait pas voulu l'accepter.

Aucune loi ne portait que le prince fût révocable : il était au contraire à vie, et les exemples qu'on pouvait citer de plusieurs doges déposés, prouvaient que de telles révolutions avaient toujours été le résultat d'un mouvement populaire.

Mais d'ailleurs, si le doge pouvait être déposé, ce n'était pas assurément par un tribunal composé d'un petit nombre de membres, institué pour punir les crimes, et nullement

investi du droit de révoquer ce que le corps souverain de l'état avait fait.

Cependant le tribunal arrêta que les six conseillers de la seigneurie, et les chefs du conseil des dix, se transporteraient auprès du doge, pour lui signifier que l'excellentissime conseil avait jugé convenable qu'il abdiquât une dignité dont son âge ne lui permettait plus de remplir les fonctions. On lui donnait 1500 ducats d'or pour son entretien, et vingt-quatre heures pour se décider.*

Foscari répondit sur-le-champ avec beaucoup de gravité, que deux fois il avait voulu se démettre de sa charge; qu'au lieu de le lui permettre, on avait exigé de lui le serment de ne plus réitérer cette demande: que la providence avait prolongé ses jours pour l'éprouver et pour l'affliger, que cependant on n'était pas en droit de reprocher sa longue vie à un homme qui avait employé quatre-vingt-quatre ans au service de la république: qu'il était prêt encore à lui sacrifier sa vie, mais que, pour sa dignité, il la tenait de la république entière, et qu'il se réservait de répondre sur ce sujet, quand la volonté générale se serait légalement manifestée.

Le lendemain, à l'heure indiquée, les conseillers et les chefs des dix se présentèrent. Il ne voulut pas leur donner d'autre réponse. Le conseil s'assembla sur-le-champ, lui envoya demander encore une fois sa résolution, séance tenante, et, la réponse ayant été la même, on prononça que le doge était relevé de son serment et déposé de sa dignité, on lui assignait une pension de 1500 ducats d'or, en lui enjoignant de sortir du palais dans huit jours, sous peine de voir tous ses biens confisqués.†

* Ce décret est rapporté textuellement dans la notice.

† La notice rapporte aussi ce décret.

Le lendemain, ce décret fut porté au doge, et ce fut Jacques Loredan qui eut la cruelle joie de le lui présenter.* Il répondit : "Si j'avais pu prévoir que ma vieil-
" lesse fût préjudiciable à l'état, le chef de la république
" ne se serait pas montré assez ingrat, pour préférer sa
" dignité à la patrie ; mais cette vie lui ayant été utile
" pendant tant d'années, je voulais lui en consacrer jus-
" qu'au dernier moment. Le décret est rendu, je m'y
" conformerai." Après avoir parlé ainsi il se dépouilla des marques de sa dignité, remit l'anneau ducal qui fut brisé en sa présence, et dès le jour suivant il quitta ce palais, qu'il avait habité pendant trente-cinq ans, accompagné de son frère, de ses parents, et de ses amis. Un secretaire, qui se trouva sur le perron, l'invita à descendre par un escalier dérobé, afin d'éviter la foule du peuple, qui s'était rassemblé dans les cours, mais il s'y refusa, disant qu'il voulait descendre par où il était monté et quand il fut au bas de l'escalier des géants, il se retourna, appuyé sur sa béquille, vers le palais, en proférant ces paroles : "Mes services m'y avaient appelé, la
" malice de mes ennemis m'en fait sortir."

La foule qui s'ouvrait sur son passage, et qui avait peut-être désiré sa mort, était émue de respect et d'attendrissement.* Rentré dans sa maison, il recommanda à sa famille d'oublier les injures de ses ennemis. Personne dans les divers corps de l'état ne se crut en droit de s'étonner, qu'un prince inamovible eût été déposé sans qu'on lui reprochât rien ; que l'état eût perdu son chef, à l'insu du sénat et du corps souverain lui-même. Le peuple

* On lit dans la notice ces propres mots : "Se fosse stato in loro potere volentieri lo avrebbero restituito."

seul laissa échapper quelques regrets : une proclamation du conseil des dix prescrivit le silence le plus absolu sur cette affaire, sous peine de mort.

Avant de donner un successeur à François Foscari, une nouvelle loi fut rendue, qui défendait au doge d'ouvrir et de lire, autrement qu'en présence de ses conseillers, les dépêches des ambassadeurs de la république, et les lettres des princes étrangers.*

Les électeurs entrèrent au conclave, et nommèrent au dogat Paschal Malipier, le 30 octobre 1457. La cloche de Saint-Marc, qui annonçait à Venise son nouveau prince, vint frapper l'oreille de François Foscari; cette fois sa fermeté l'abandonna, il éprouva un tel saisissement, qu'il mourut le lendemain.†

La république arrêta qu'on lui rendrait les mêmes honneurs funèbres que s'il fût mort dans l'exercice de sa dignité; mais lorsqu'on se présenta pour enlever ses restes, sa veuve, qui de son nom était Marine Nani, déclara qu'elle ne le souffrirait point; qu'on ne devait pas traiter en prince après sa mort celui que vivant on avait dépouillé de la couronne, et que, puisqu'il avait consumé ses biens au service de l'état, elle saurait consacrer sa dot à lui faire rendre les derniers honneurs.§ On ne tint aucun compte de cette résistance, et malgré les protestations de l'ancienne dogaresse, le corps fut enlevé, revêtu des ornements ducaux, exposé en public, et les obsèques furent célébrées avec la pompe accoutumée. Le nouveau doge assista au convoi en robe de sénateur.

La pitié qu'avait inspirée le malheur de ce vieillard, ne

* Hist. di Venetia, di Paolo Morosini lib. 24.

† Hist. di Pietro Justiniani, lib. 8.

§ Hist. d'Egnatio, lib. 6. cap. 7.

fut pas tout-à-fait stérile. Un an après, on osa dire que le conseil des dix avait outrepassé ses pouvoirs, et il lui fut défendu par une loi du grand conseil de s'ingérer à l'avenir de juger le prince, à moins que ce ne fût pour cause de félonie.*

Un acte d'autorité tel que la déposition d'un doge inamovible de sa nature, aurait pu exciter un soulèvement général, ou au moins occasioner une division dans une république autrement constituée que Venise. Mais depuis trois ans, il existait dans celle-ci une magistrature, ou plutôt une autorité, devant laquelle tout devait se taire.

EXTRAIT DE L'HISTOIRE DES RÉPUBLIQUES ITALIENNES DU MOYEN AGE. PAR J. C. L. SIMONDE DE SISMONDI. TOM. X.

LE doge de Venise, qui avait prévenu par ce traité une guerre non moins dangereuse que celle qu'il avait terminée presque en même temps par le traité de Lodi, était alors parvenu à une extrême vieillesse. François Foscari occupait cette première dignité de l'état dès le 15 avril 1423, Quoiqu'il fût déjà âgé de plus de cinquante-un ans à l'époque de son élection, il était cependant le plus jeune des quarante-un électeurs. Il avait eu beaucoup de peine à parvenir au rang qu'il convoitait, et son élection avait été conduite avec beaucoup d'adresse. Pendant plusieurs tours de scrutin ses amis les plus zélés s'étaient abstenus de lui

* Ce décret est du 25 octobre, 1458. La notice le rapporte.

donner leur suffrage, pour que les autres ne le considérassent pas comme un concurrent redoutable. * Le conseil des dix craignait son crédit parmi la noblesse pauvre, parce qu'il avait cherché à se la rendre favorable, tandis qu'il était procurateur de Saint-Marc, en faisant employer plus de trente mille ducats à doter des jeunes filles de bonne maison, ou à établir de jeunes gentilshommes. On craignait encore sa nombreuse famille, car alors il était père de quatre enfans, et marié de nouveau : enfin on redoutait son ambition et son goût pour la guerre. L'opinion que ses adversaires s'étaient formée de lui fut vérifiée par les événemens ; pendant trente-quatre ans que Foscari fut à la tête de la république, elle ne cessa point de combattre. Si les hostilités étaient suspendues durant quelques mois, c'était pour recommencer bientôt avec plus de vigueur. Ce fut l'époque où Venise étendit son empire sur Brescia, Bergame, Ravenne et Crême ; où elle fonda sa domination de Lombardie, et parut sans cesse sur le point d'asservir toute cette province. Profond, courageux, inébranlable, Foscari communiqua aux conseils son propre caractère, et ses talens lui firent obtenir plus d'influence sur la république, que n'avaient exercé la plupart de ses prédécesseurs. Mais si son ambition avait eu pour but l'agrandissement de sa famille, elle fut cruellement trompée : trois de ses fils moururent dans les huit années qui suivirent son élection ; le quatrième, Jacob, par lequel la maison Foscari s'est perpétuée, fut victime de la jalousie du conseil des dix, et empoisonna par ses malheurs les jours de son père. †

* Marin Sanuto, Vite de' Duchi di Venezia, p. 967.
† Ibid p. 968.

En effet, le conseil des dix, redoublant de défiance envers le chef de l'état, lorsqu'il le voyait plus fort par ses talens et sa popularité, veillait sans cesse sur Foscari, pour le punir de son crédit et de sa gloire. Au mois de février 1445, Michel Bevilacqua, Florentin, exilé à Venise, accusa en secret Jacques Foscari auprès des inquisiteurs d'état, d'avoir reçu du duc Philippe Visconti, des présens d'argent et de joyaux, par les mains des gens de sa maison. Telle était l'odieuse procédure adoptée à Venise, que sur cette accusation secrète, le fils du doge, du représentant de la majesté de la république, fut mis à la torture. On lui arracha par l'estrapade l'aveu des charges portées contre lui ; il fut relégué pour le reste de ses jours à Napoli de Romanie, avec obligation de se présenter chaque matin au commandant de la place.* Cependant, le vaisseau qui le portait ayant touché à Trieste, Jacob, grièvement malade des suites de la torture, et plus encore de l'humiliation qu'il avait éprouvée, demanda en grâce au conseil des dix de n'être pas envoyé plus loin. Il obtint cette faveur, par une délibération du 28 décembre 1446 ; il fut rappelé à Trévise, et il eut la liberté d'habiter tout le Trévisan indifféremment.†

Il vivait en paix à Trévise ; et la fille de Léonard Contarini, qu'il avait épousée le 10 février 1441, était venue le joindre dans son exil, lorsque, le 5 novembre 1450, Almoro Donato, chef du conseil des dix, fut assassiné. deux autres inquisiteurs d'état, Triadano Gritti et Antonio Venieri portèrent leurs soupçons sur Jacob Foscari, parce qu'un domestique à lui, nommé Olivier,

* Marin Sanuto, p. 968.
† Ibid. Vite, p. 1123.

avait été vu ce soir-là même à Venise, et avait des premiers donné la nouvelle de cet assassinat. Olivier fut mis à la torture, mais il nia jusqu'à la fin, avec un courage inébranlable, le crime dont on l'accusait, quoique ses juges eussent la barbarie de lui faire donner jusqu'à quatre-vingts tours d'estrapade. Cependant, comme Jacob Foscari avait de puissans motifs d'inimitié contre le conseil des dix qui l'avait condamné, et qui témoignait de la haine au doge son père, on essaya de mettre à son tour Jacob à la torture, et l'on prolongea contre lui ces affreux tourments, sans réussir à en tirer aucune confession. Malgré sa dénégation, le conseil des dix le condamna à être transporté à la Canée, et accorda une récompense à son délateur. Mais les horribles douleurs que Jacob Foscari avait éprouvées, avaient troublé sa raison ; ses persécuteurs, touchés de ce dernier malheur, permirent qu'on le ramenât à Venise le 26 mai 1451. Il embrassa son père, il puisa dans ses exhortations quelque courage et quelque calme, et il fut reconduit immédiatement à la Canée.* Sur ces entrefaites, Nicolas Erizzo, homme déjà noté pour un précédent crime, confessa, en mourant, que c'était lui qui avait tué Almoro Donato.†

Le malheureux doge, François Foscari, avait déjà cherché, à plusieurs reprises, à abdiquer une dignité si funeste à lui-même et à sa famille. Il lui semblait que, redescendu au rang de simple citoyen, comme il n'inspirerait plus de crainte ou de jalousie, on n'accablerait

* Marin Sanuto, p. 1138.—M. Ant. Sabellico. Deca III, L. VI. f. 187.

† Ibid. p. 1139.

plus son fils par ces effroyables persécutions. Abattu par la mort de ses premiers enfans, il avait voulu, dès le 26 juin 1433, déposer une dignité, durant l'exercice de laquelle sa patrie avait été tourmentée par la guerre, par la peste, et par des malheurs de tout genre.* Il renouvela cette proposition après les jugements rendus contre son fils ; mais le conseil des dix le retenait forcément sur le trône, comme il retenait son fils dans les fers.

En vain Jacob Foscari, obligé de se présenter chaque jour au gouverneur de la Canée, réclamait contre l'injustice de sa dernière sentence, sur laquelle la confession d'Erizzo ne laissait plus de doutes. En vain il demandait grâce au farouche conseil des dix ; il ne pouvait obtenir aucune réponse. Le désir de revoir son père et sa mère, arrivés tous deux au dernier terme de la vieillesse, le désir de revoir une patrie dont la cruauté ne méritait pas un si tendre amour, se changèrent en lui en une vraie fureur. Ne pouvant retourner à Venise pour y vivre libre, il voulut du moins y aller chercher un supplice. Il écrivit au duc de Milan à la fin de mai 1456, pour implorer sa protection auprès du sénat : et sachant qu'une telle lettre serait considérée comme un crime, il l'exposa lui-même dans un lieu où il était sûr qu'elle serait saisie par les espions qui l'entouraient. En effet, la lettre étant déférée au conseil des dix, on l'envoya chercher aussitôt, et il fut reconduit à Venise le 19 juillet 1456.†

Jacob Foscari ne nia point sa lettre, il raconta en même temps dans quel but il l'avait écrite, et comment il l'avait

* Marin Sanuto, p. 1032.
† Ibid. p. 1162.

fait tomber entre les mains de son délateur. Malgré ces aveux, Foscari fut remis à la torture, et on lui donna trente tours d'estrapade, pour voir s'il confirmerait ensuite ses dépositions. Quand on le détacha de la corde, on le trouva déchiré par ces horribles secousses. Les juges permirent alors à son père, à sa mère, à sa femme, et à ses fils, d'aller le voir dans sa prison. Le vieux Foscari, appuyé sur un bâton, ne se traîna qu'avec peine dans la chambre où son fils unique était pansé de ses blessures. Ce fils demandait encore la grâce de mourir dans sa maison.—"Retourne à ton " exil, mon fils, puisque ta patrie l'ordonne, lui dit le " doge, et soumets-toi à sa volonté." Mais en rentrant dans son palais, ce malheureux vieillard s'évanouit, épuisé par la violence qu'il s'était faite. Jacob devait encore passer une année en prison à la Canée, avant qu'on lui rendît la même liberté limitée à laquelle il était réduit avant cet événement; mais à peine fut-il débarqué sur cette terre d'exil, qu'il y mourut de douleur.*

Dès-lors, et pendant quinze mois, le vieux doge accablé d'années et de chagrins, ne recouvra plus la force de son corps ou celle de son âme; il n'assistait plus à aucun des conseils, et il ne pouvait plus remplir aucune des fonctions de sa dignité. Il était entré dans sa quatre-vingt-sixième année, et si le conseil des dix avait été susceptible de quelque pitié, il aurait attendu en silence la fin, sans doute prochaine, d'une carrière marquée par tant de gloire et tant de malheurs. Mais le chef du conseil des dix était alors Jacques Loredano, fils de Marc, et neveu de Pierre, le grand amiral, qui toute leur vie avaient été les ennemis

* Marin Sanuto, p 1163.—Navagiero Stor. Venez. p. 1118.

acharnés du vieux doge. Ils avaient transmis leur haine à leurs enfants, et cette vieille rancune n'était pas encore satisfaite.* A l'instigation de Loredano, Jérôme Barbarigo, inquisiteur d'état, proposa au conseil des dix, au mois d'octobre 1457, de soumettre Foscari à une nouvelle humiliation. Dès que ce magistrat ne pouvait plus remplir ses fonctions, Barbarigo demanda qu'on nommât un autre doge. Le conseil, qui avait refusé par deux fois l'abdication de Foscari, parce que la constitution ne pouvait la permettre, hésita avant de se mettre en contradiction avec ses propres décrets. Les discussions dans le conseil et la junte, se prolongèrent pendant huit jours, jusque fort avant dans la nuit. Cependant, on fit entrer dans l'assemblée Marco Foscari, procurateur de Saint-Marc, et frère du doge, pour qu'il fût lié par le redoutable serment du secret, et qu'il ne pût arrêter les menées de ses ennemis. Enfin, le conseil se rendit auprès du doge, et lui demanda d'abdiquer volontairement un emploi qu'il ne pouvait plus exercer. "J'ai juré," répondit le vieillard, "de remplir jusqu'à ma mort, selon "mon honneur et ma conscience, les fonctions aux- "quelles ma patrie m'a appelé. Je ne puis me délier "moi-même de mon serment; qu'un ordre des conseils "dispose de moi, je m'y soumettrai, mais je ne le devan- "cerai pas." Alors une nouvelle délibération du conseil délia François Foscari de son serment ducal, lui assura une pension de deux mille ducats pour le reste de sa vie, et lui ordonna d'évacuer en trois jours le palais, et de déposer les ornemens de sa dignité. Le doge ayant

* Vettor Sandi Storia civile Veneziana, P. II. L. VIII. p. 715 p. 717.

remarqué parmi les conseillers qui lui portèrent cet ordre, un chef de la quarantie qu'il ne connaissait pas, demanda son nom : "Je suis le fils de Marco Memmo," lui dit le conseiller.—"Ah ! ton père était mon ami," lui dit le vieux doge, en soupirant. Il donna aussitôt des ordres pour qu'on transportât ses effets dans une maison à lui ; et le lendemain, 23 octobre, on le vit, se soutenant à peine, et appuyé sur son vieux frère, redescendre ces mêmes escaliers sur lesquels, trente-quatre ans auparavant, on l'avait vu installé avec tant de pompe, et traverser ces mêmes salles où la république avait reçu ses sermens. Le peuple entier parut indigné de tant de dureté exercée contre un vieillard qu'il respectait et qu'il aimait ; mais le conseil des dix fit publier une défense de parler de cette révolution, sous peine d'être traduit devant les inquisiteurs d'état. Le 20 octobre, Pasqual Malipieri, procurateur de Saint-Marc, fut élu pour successeur de Foscari ; celui-ci n'eut pas néanmoins l'humiliation de vivre sujet, là où il avait régné. En entendant le son des cloches, qui sonnaient en actions de grâces pour cette élection, il mourut subitement d'une hémorragie causée par une veine qui s'éclata dans sa poitrine. *

"Le doge, blessé de trouver constamment un contradicteur et un censeur si amer dans son frère, lui dit un jour en plein conseil : 'Messire Augustin, vous faites

* Marin Sanuto, Vite de' Duchi di Venezia, p. 1164.—Chronicon Eugubinum, T. XXI, p. 992.—Cristoforo da Soldo Istoria Bresciana, T. XXI, p. 891.—Navigero Storia Veneziana, T. XXIII, p. 1120.—M. A. Sabellico. Deca III, L. VIII. f. 201.

'tout votre possible pour hâter ma mort; vous vous flattez 'de me succéder: mais si les autres vous connaissent aussi bien que je vous connais, ils n'auront garde de vous élire.' Là dessus il se leva, ému de colère, rentra dans son appartement, et mourut quelques jours après. Ce frère, contre lequel il s'était emporté, fut précisément le successeur qu'on lui donna. C'était un mérite dont on aimait à tenir compte, surtout à un parent, de s'être mis en opposition avec le chef de la république."* *Daru, Histoire de Venise*, vol. ii. sec. xi. p. 533.

* The Venetians appear to have had a particular turn for breaking the hearts of their Doges: the above is another instance of the kind in the Doge Marco Barbarigo; he was succeeded by his brother Agostino Barbarigo, whose chief merit is above-mentioned.

In Lady Morgan's fearless and excellent work upon "Italy," I perceive the expression of "Rome of the Ocean" applied to Venice. The same phrase occurs in the "Two Foscari." My publisher can vouch for me that the tragedy was written and sent to England some time before I had seen Lady Morgan's work, which I only received on the 16th of August. I hasten, however, to notice the coincidence, and to yield the originality of the phrase to her who first placed it before the public. I am the more anxious to do this, as I am informed (for I have seen but few of the specimens, and those accidentally) that there have been lately brought against me charges of plagiarism. I have also had an anonymous sort of threatening intimation of the same kind, apparently with the intent of extorting money. To such charges I have no answer to make. One of them is ludicrous enough. I am reproached for having formed the description of a shipwreck in verse from the narratives of many *actual* shipwrecks in *prose*, selecting such materials as were most striking. Gibbon makes it a merit in Tasso "to have copied the minutest details of the siege of Jerusalem from the Chronicles." In *me* it may be a demerit, I presume; let it remain so. Whilst I have been occupied in defending *Pope's* character, the lower orders of Grub-street appear to have been assailing *mine*: this is as it should be, both in them and in me. One of the accusations in the nameless epistle alluded to is still more laughable: it states seriously that I "received five hundred pounds for writing advertisements for Day and "Martin's patent blacking!" This is the highest compliment to my literary powers which I ever received.

It states also "that a person has been trying to make "acquaintance with Mr. Townsend, a gentleman of the "law, who was with me on business in Venice three "years ago, for the purpose of obtaining any defama-"tory particulars of my life from this occasional visitor." Mr. Townsend is welcome to say what he knows. I mention these particulars merely to show the world in general what the *literary* lower world contains, and their way of setting to work. Another charge made, I am told, in the "Literary Gazette" is, that I wrote the notes to "Queen Mab," a work which I never saw till some time after its publication, and which I recollect showing to Mr. Sotheby as a poem of great power and imagination. I never wrote a line of the notes, nor ever saw them except in their published form. No one knows better than their real author, that his opinions and mine differ materially upon the metaphysical portion of that work; though in common with all who are not blinded by baseness and bigotry, I highly admire the poetry of that and his other publications.

Mr. Southey, too, in his pious preface to a poem whose blasphemy is as harmless as the sedition of Wat Tyler, because it is equally absurd with that sincere production, calls upon the "legislature to look to it," as the toleration of such writings led to the French Revolution: *not* such writings as Wat Tyler, but as those of the "Satanic School." This is not true, and Mr. Southey knows it to be not true. Every French writer of any freedom was persecuted; Voltaire and Rousseau were exiles, Marmontel and Diderot were sent to the Bastille, and a perpetual war was waged with the whole class by the existing despotism. In the next place, the French Revolution was *not* occasioned by any writings whatsoever, but must have occurred

had no such writers ever existed. It is the fashion to attribute every thing to the French revolution, and the French revolution to every thing but its real cause. That cause is obvious—the government exacted too much, and the people could neither *give* nor *bear more*. Without this, the Encyclopedists might have written their fingers off without the occurrence of a single alteration. And the *English* revolution—(the first, I mean)—what was it occasioned by? The *puritans* were surely as pious and moral as Wesley or his biographer? Acts—acts on the part of government, and *not* writings against them, have caused the past convulsions, and are tending to the future.

I look upon such as inevitable, though no revolutionist: I wish to see the English constitution restored and not destroyed. Born an aristocrat, and naturally one by temper, with the greater part of my present property in the funds, what have *I* to gain by a revolution? Perhaps I have more to lose in every way than Mr. Southey, with all his places and presents for panegyrics and abuse into the bargain. But that a revolution is inevitable, I repeat. The government may exult over the repression of petty tumults; these are but the receding waves repulsed and broken for a moment on the shore, while the great tide is still rolling on and gaining ground with every breaker. Mr. Southey accuses us of attacking the religion of the country; and is he abetting it by writing lives of *Wesley?* One mode of worship is merely destroyed by another. There never was, nor ever will be, a country without a religion. We shall be told of *France* again: but it was only Paris and a frantic party, which for a moment upheld their dogmatic nonsense of theo-philanthropy. The church of England, if overthrown, will be

swept away by the sectarians, and not by the sceptics. People are too wise, too well-informed, too certain of their own immense importance in the realms of space, ever to submit to the impiety of doubt. There may be a few such diffident speculators, like water in the pale sunbeam of human reason, but they are very few; and their opinions, without enthusiasm or appeal to the passions, can never gain proselytes—unless indeed, they are persecuted: *that*, to be sure, will increase any thing.

Mr. S., with a cowardly ferocity, exults over the anticipated "death-bed repentance" of the objects of his dislike; and indulges himself in a pleasant "Vision of Judgment," in prose as well as verse, full of impious impudence. What Mr. S.'s sensations or ours may be in the awful moment of leaving this state of existence neither he nor we can pretend to decide. In common, I presume, with most men of any reflection, *I* have not waited for a "death-bed" to repent of many of my actions, notwithstanding the "diabolical pride" which this pitiful renegado in his rancour would impute to those who scorn *him*. Whether, upon the whole, the good or evil of my deeds may preponderate is not for me to ascertain; but, as my means and opportunities have been greater, I shall limit my present defence to an assertion (easily proved, if necessary,) that I, "in my degree," have done more real good in any one given year, since I was twenty, than Mr. Southey in the whole course of his shifting and turncoat existence. There are several actions to which I can look back with an honest pride, not to be damped by the calumnies of a hireling. There are others to which I recur with sorrow and repentance; but the only *act* of *my* life of which Mr. Southey can have any real knowledge, as it was one which brought

me in contact with a near connexion of his own, did no dishonour to that connexion nor to me.

I am not ignorant of Mr. Southey's calumnies on a different occasion, knowing them to be such, which he scattered abroad, on his return from Switzerland, against me and others: they have done him no good in this world: and, if his creed be the right one, they will do him less in the next. What *his* "death-bed" may be, it is not my province to predicate: let him settle it with his Maker, as I must do with mine. There is something at once ludicrous and blasphemous in this arrogant scribbler of all works sitting down to deal damnation and destruction upon his fellow creatures, with Wat Tyler, the Apotheosis of George the Third, and the Elegy on Martin the regicide, all shuffled together in his writing-desk. One of his consolations appears to be a Latin note from a work of a Mr. Landor, the author of "Gebir," whose friendship for Robert Southey will, it seems, "be an honour to him when the ephemeral disputes and ephemeral reputations of the day are forgotten." I for one neither envy him "the friendship," nor the glory in reversion which is to accrue from it, like Mr. Thelusson's fortune in the third and fourth generation.—This friendship will probably be as memorable as his own epics, which (as I quoted to him ten or twelve years ago in "English Bards") Porson said "would be remembered when Homer and Virgil are forgotten, and not till then." For the present, I leave him.

END OF VOL. X